

HALESOWEN CHRONICLE



Thursday, January 3, 2013

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Packing it up

Mayor lends a hand to help support victims

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Fond farewell

Teacher takes retirement after 40 years with pupils

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Cards galore

Hotly contested match sees seven yellows given

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£6m hub looking set for approval

THE latest phase of Dudley College's ambitious town centre "learning quarter" – an ultra modern £6.6 million manufacturing and engineering hub – looks set to be approved.

No objections have been raised to the Dudley Advance scheme, although a report to the borough's planning committee says the building could be criticised for having a "box type form".

But the council's urban design officers say it would be suitable for its purpose.

The borough's Historic Environment Team considers the development would be "an iconic and intentionally modern building that reflects its future role in fostering the development of cutting edge technology."

The planning committee will be recommended to approve the scheme at its meeting on January 7.

Dudley College heard last month it had been awarded a £2.2 million from the Skills Funding Agency – a third of the cost of the development of the Dudley Advance centre for advanced manufacturing and engineering technologies in Priority Road.

The announcement came as Business Secretary Vince Cable visited the college.

Interest in buttons firm

THREE companies have expressed an interest in buying a famous Halesowen button manufacturer that closed suddenly with the loss of 25 jobs.

Administrators for the 155-year-old James Grove and Sons in Stourbridge Road say it was far from certain whether any workers at James Grove and Sons would get their jobs back – or if the business would even stay in Halesowen.

Rod Butcher, of Birmingham-based Butcher Woods Corporate Recovery, said: "Three parties have expressed an interest." in this company.

50 TREES STOLEN AT BEAUTY SPOT

by Louise Jew

POLICE have pledged action to stop people illegally chopping down trees for firewood at a Halesowen beauty spot. More than 50 trees have recently been felled at the Coombeswood Wedge, between Mucklow Hill and Gorsty Hill in recent months.

The Friends of Coombeswood conservation group believes the damage is being caused by people wanting free fuel for their wood burners. They have put up notices warning that felling is not allowed at the beauty spot and are appealing to walkers using the area to contact police if they see any illegal activity.



Campaigners Sue Yeadon and Mike Clare at Coombeswood Wedge in Halesowen

Book filming due to start

Filming will start on the movie adaptation of a Dudley author's debut novel later this year, he revealed – as he looks back over an "incredible year".

Hollywood actress Nicole Kidman will star in the film, which is based on the Stourbridge-born writer's Before I Go To Sleep.

The novel tells the story of a woman who wakes up to find she does not recognise her life. It is currently in pre-production with filming due to begin in January or February, said the author, who writes under the name SJ Watson.

It will be produced by Ridley Scott and written by Rowan Joffe, whose previous hits include Brighton Rock and The American starring George Clooney.

Mr Watson, aged 41, started writing the book as a hobby while working as an audiology specialist and now admits he may never return to his old job. The book shot to number one in the Sunday Times paperback chart after being chosen by Richard Madeley and Judy Finnigan for their Book Club.

Sgt Martin Hall, of Halesowen North neighbourhood policing team, said: "Local residents made us aware of several trees having been cut down in recent months.

"It really disappoints me to think that there are some people who think it is acceptable to take a saw to any of our open spaces and remove trees and branches.

"Whilst no formal complaint of criminal damage has been received, we continue to monitor the situation and consider the area in our patrol planning.

"Rest assured anyone caught doing this will face the appropriate action. I would urge anyone who has any information about people doing this to contact us.

"Our open spaces are very important to our communities and are there for us all to enjoy.

Destroy

"To deface, damage or destroy these areas is totally unacceptable."

The Friends of Coombeswood chairman Sue Yeadon said: "A considerable amount of damage has been caused and we think it is by local people who have seen that wood has been chopped and think they might get away with it, too.

"There has been a rise in people having wood burners – and we believe some are seeing Coombeswood Wedge as a way of saving on fuel.

"But, not only is it decimating the woodland, it is also causing a health and safety hazard because people could trip over trees which have been chopped down, with the wood, presumably, left for collection later.

"Initially, we think a few local individuals were responsible but then it escalated and we want to nip it in the bud before it snowballs."

Mrs Yeadon said land owner St Modwen had confirmed it had not given permission for trees to be felled on Monarch's Way.

New cranes give zoo a lift



Kellie Piper with one of the new Paradise cranes which are settling in at the zoo

DUDLEY is the new Paradise for a pair of endangered birds from South Africa.

The Paradise cranes, also known as blue or Stanley cranes, are now part of a breeding programme launched by Dudley Zoological Gardens.

The cranes are the national bird of South Africa and their feathers were traditionally presented to men from the Amakhosha tribe to celebrate and reward acts of valour.

It is the first time Paradise cranes have been at the zoo in its 75-year history and the two newcomers have been allocated to the zoo by the European Endangered Species Programme. Team leader for the birds section at Dudley Zoo, Kellie Piper, said: "They are both really friendly and come right up to the fence and make little noises to greet visitors. They quickly made themselves at home with the other birds in the aviary."

Progress made over proposals on church

A BID by campaigners to take over a Dudley church has cleared the first hurdle after being submitted to the Diocese of Worcester.

The St John's Church Preservation Group has put in a business plan and reopening schedule for the Grade II-listed building, in Kates Hill, which has been closed for 10 years.

The proposals have gone before the Worcester Diocese's pastoral committee and been passed on to the closed churches committee.

If approved, the business plan will be passed on to the Church Commissioners in London to make a decision on whether to allow the preservation group to lease the building.

Members want to keep the 173-year-old church building, which is described as "a virtually intact Victorian church" as unaltered as possible but will restore some of the old features such as the lychgate.

They want to be able to resume Christian worship and host events and shows, community groups and events to foster multi cultural understanding.

The group plans to carry out the restoration work in small stages beginning with the drains and waterproofing, expected to cost £2,000.

Hunt on for bank robber

POLICE are hunting an armed robber who threatened staff at the Royal Bank of Scotland in Dudley town centre and took thousands of pounds. It was believed the raider had a concealed weapon. No-one was hurt during the raid on the High Street bank at 10.15am on Christmas Eve.

Detective Constable Stephen Goddard said: "High Street would have been busy with Christmas shoppers at the time and we want to hear from anyone who saw the man responsible and can help us identify him." Call 101 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

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Bronze Kristian vaults his way to duchess duties



Kristian with the Duchess of Cambridge during the men's pommel horse final

KRISTIAN Thomas was Wolverhampton's biggest success story at the Olympics after his stunning bronze medal win.

The Wednesfield gymnast was part of the Team GB squad who claimed the first men's team gymnastic medal in 100 years at London 2012. His final high bar and floor routine at the North Greenwich Arena secured bronze for the team – after they were briefly elevated to silver in an afternoon of drama.

Only Japan's successful appeal, which left them in second place, denied Team GB an

even better result – but Thomas, who trains at the Earls Gymnastics Club, Halesowen, admits he couldn't believe his success.

"I keep looking down at the medal and I'm amazed," said the 23-year-old.

"There was a lot of pressure on that routine. I was very confident I could go through it successfully. We've put in all the hard work and it was a matter of controlling the nerves and letting the body take over."

He finished seventh in the all-round event and eighth in the vault final as the Team GB

gymnasts collected the team bronze. And Thomas believes British Gymnastics, which is based at Lilleshall, is about to explode after their achievements.

"It's been pretty surreal," said Kristian, who found himself sitting next to the Duchess of Cambridge discussing the finer points of the pommel event. "The aim from British Gymnastics was to come away with one medal but to get a team medal and three other individual medals has been fantastic. Let's hope it's a new era."

Our golden girl

Tears then cheers for Jordanne

IT was a case of tears to cheers for Halesowen's Jordanne Whitley after she bounced back from semi-final heartbreak to claim wheelchair tennis doubles bronze at the Paralympic Games.

Whitley and partner Lucy Shuker were left inconsolable after seeing their gold medal dreams ended by Dutch pair Aniek van Koot and Jiske Griffioen.

After picking themselves up, Whitley and Shuker sought the consolation of a bronze medal against a pair from Thailand. Despite losing the first set and slipping to a 3-0 deficit and match point in the second, they battled back to win.

Whitley said afterwards: "It was such hard work and it's such a relief."

I'll be back, says Varnish

JESS Varnish vowed to battle back from her Olympic heartbreak as she sets her sights on Rio. The 21-year-old from Bromsgrove suffered a nightmare after she and team sprint partner Victoria Pendleton were demoted from the final.

They were guaranteed silver but disqualified after Pendleton passed Varnish, a member of Halesowen Cycling Club, too early on the final lap. But Varnish insisted her Velodrome frustration on her Olympic debut will not break her. "It makes me feel sick thinking about it but I'm going to get over it," she said.

Great Scott!

HALESOWEN'S Helen Scott has committed her future to racing for Paralympic gold with Aileen McGlynn in Rio. Scott, the sighted pilot to tandem rider McGlynn, claimed bronze in the tandem pursuit after winning silver with McGlynn in the 1km time trial and wants to complete the set in four years.



Ellie Simmonds receives one of her gold medals at the Paralympics and, inset, at the BBC's Sports Personality of Year award ceremony

Ellie Simmonds' smile sums up the success of London 2012. The Chronicle looks back at our local athletes' triumphs and despairs

AT just 13, Ellie Simmonds had already etched her legacy into the Paralympics and has been rewarded with an OBE in the New Years Honours.

Now, after London 2012 she is the nation's sweetheart. So much so that she was one of the 12 athletes nominated for the BBC's Sports Personality of the Year.

The expectation and pressure heaped on the Walsall swimming sensation after her gold rush four years ago was immense.

Boldmere Swimming Club star Simmonds was one of the faces of the London Paralympic Games at the age of 17 as the nation waited for her to deliver the golds they, and she, craved.

She did it in style with two golds, plus a silver and a bronze to justify her billing as one of the greatest Paralympic swimmers of the modern era.

She smashed her own world record by five seconds in the 400m – clocking 5:19.17s – and her Games-long battle with American teenager Victoria Arlen was one of the stories of the Paralympics.

Simmonds has dominated since winning double gold in Beijing, taking 15 consecutive major championship titles, including 10 world golds, in the last three years.

But she admitted, especially in the 400m, to feeling the heat from

the home crowd. I felt like I had a lot of pressure on me," said Simmonds, who won 100m and 400m freestyle S6 in Beijing in 2008. It means so much to win a gold at your home Paralympics and the pressure was quite hard to deal with.

"The crowd were amazing, they got me to that wall first. People expected me to get gold, which was not the case with Victoria on the scene. It was a five-second personal best and I knew it would be so tough leading into it with Victoria being in such good form."

"The last 50m hurt, it just killed me, and I was so pleased to touch, I

knew I had no regrets and I am so pleased. I knew my race plan and it was to stick with Victoria for the first 200m and then kick my legs for the last 200m and just go for it. The last 50m I literally gave it everything, when I touched, I had no energy left. It was a tough race, one of the toughest races of my life."

Simmonds' biggest concern pre-Games was that she would cry again in her post-race interviews, the teenager admitting she still can't watch her Beijing performances because her emotions embarrass her. It was one target she didn't achieve as the waterworks flowed

after her victories – and her bronze in the 50m.

It was her fourth strongest event and Simmonds was ranked fourth going into the final but produced a fine swim to claim third. Outsiders may think that a failure, but Simmonds admitted her shock at even making the podium.

"That was a massive surprise. This is my fourth event and I was going into the final fourth so I didn't expect that," she said.

"I was hoping to go for a personal best and see what happened and so to get a bronze, I will definitely take that."

Bulldog Pollock Clarke challenge Time for studies

NO-ONE epitomises the British bulldog spirit more than wheelchair basketball player Jon Pollock but, as he battled through the pain barrier, the USA added insult to injury by denying Great Britain a third consecutive Paralympic bronze medal. The 35-year-old Wolverhampton Rhinos star was forced to undergo a pain-killing injection in his arm for Great Britain's last six matches but despite his tenacity, he ended his fourth Paralympic Games empty-handed.

DARREN Harris has been challenged to lead Great Britain's five-a-side football team to the medal mix-up at Rio 2016 by retiring legend Dave Clarke after the host nation finished their London 2012 campaign on a high. At 39 and with more than 100 caps to his name, the Wolverhampton ace is among the senior members of the Great Britain team which ended London 2012 with a first win of the competition to finish in seventh place compared to coming fifth at Beijing 2008.

JAMES FAIR has dismissed thoughts on Rio 2016 – and admitted he will concentrate on his studies first. The hockey goalkeeper from Cannock has started teacher training after Team GB's disappointing Olympics. They suffered a nightmare semi-final losing 9-2 to Holland and were beaten by Australia in the bronze medal match. It was a crushing blow for a squad with realistic hopes of gold and Fair admits he has some thinking to do.

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Company is fined for death

A STEEL factory, where a worker was killed after being crushed by a 15-ton overhead crane, has been ordered to pay a total of £146,552 after admitting health and safety breaches.

Wilfred Williams had been working about 20ft off the ground on one of the cranes at C Brown and Sons, in Brierley Hill, on May 27, 2011.

After finishing his task, he stepped from the gantry he was working on to the rail in a nearby bay and sat down.

Wolverhampton Crown Court heard a crane was moved by an operator who had not seen the 58-year-old. Mr Williams, from Ashtree Road, Tividale, was crushed.

The firm, in Pedmore Lane, pleaded guilty to charges of breaching the Health and Safety at Work Act and contravening Work at Height Regulations.

It was ordered to pay £120,000 for the Health and Safety Act breach along with legal costs of £16,319. HSE investigation costs of £10,217 and a £15 victim surcharge.

Mrs Fiona Carter, prosecuting, said the firm had been aware of the risks for years. Mr Peter Smith, for the firm, said: "Things were being done but not as quickly as they should have been."

Dry storage for road salt

A SALT barn has been built in Dudley as part of a £1.1 million project to combat the cold weather on the roads.

Thomas Vale Construction has completed work at Dudley Council's Lister Road depot to enable up to 7,500 tons of salt that was stored outside to be covered.

Councillor Judy Foster, cabinet member for transportation, said: "I'm delighted the new salt barn has now been completed. It means the salt can now be stored inside and away from the elements, preventing salt water run off in surrounding areas."

Conversion plan

A VACANT office block in Dudley could be converted into flats. Regal Invest LLP has submitted proposals for Nexia House, The Broadway. It has been empty nearly two years after failing to attract interest from firms wanting office space. Plans for 10 two-bedroom and two one-bedroom apartments have been lodged with Dudley Council.

Portal will boost our waterways – expert



Graham Fisher – delight

DUDLEY Canal Trust's new £3 million education, exhibition and heritage centre will put the region's waterways industry on the map, according to a leading expert, as the development moved closer to reality.

Plans for the attraction, which will be called The Portal, have been recommended for approval by planners at Dudley Council.

It will be situated by the Dudley Canal Tunnel entrance at Todds End and built with the help of funding from lottery cash, grants and donations. The two-storey building will be used to tell visitors about the Black Country's industrial past.

Graham Fisher MBE, past president of the

Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal Society and a member of the new West Midlands Waterways Partnership, said he was delighted by news the development was moving forward.

"The centre will really put Dudley on the map," said Mr Fisher, who has also piloted narrowboats for the trust over the years.

"I'm delighted that the plans have reached this stage and I'm sure it will become a wonderful feature for the Black Country."

Planning officers at Dudley Council have backed the proposals and recommended they are given the go-ahead by councillors at a meeting this month. A swing bridge would be constructed

to enable visitors from the Black Country Living Museum on the opposite side of the canal to access the ticket office, trip boats and heritage centre.

Bosses also plan to install a lift to enable people to get to and from the towpath and visitor embarkation wharf.

The top floor of the centre would provide a direct access from the boat trips car park off Birmingham New Road.

Jobs will be created as part of the development.

The canal trust is inviting members and supporters to make donations to the scheme. For details visit www.dudleycanaltrust.org.uk

School governor's concerns over £18m retirement site

A PRIMARY school governor has raised objections to plans for an £18 million retirement village in Cradley Heath amid fears the development would put children's safety at risk.

Housing landlord Midland

Heart wants to build a complex containing 130 apartments, on the site of the former Cradley High School, off Homer Hill Road.

But Jennie Dunn, who sits on the board of governors at nearby Cradley CE Primary School, has written to planning officers at Dudley Council to submit concerns over the development.

Mrs Dunn said the scheme did not appear would not have enough parking spaces for the number of residents, staff and visitors and would result in cars being left in a neighbouring street.

Mrs Dunn said although the concept was good for the area, she feared increased traffic could be dangerous for children walking to and from school.

She also said the security of the school and safety of the pupils could be put at a risk if a track which leads to the development site as well as the school, park and cemetery is also used by visitors.

"The proposed development has limited parking on

by Heather Large

site; it has not taken into account parking for the residents and visitors as well as staff, nurses, doctors and carers.

"This will cause Slade Road to be used for parking. Any extra parked vehicles will impact on the school and the safety of the pupils attending the school."

She added: "The development in itself I feel is good but with minimal expense to the developers, it could be improved by extra parking and minor safety measures which would ensure the safety of residents and users of the facilities."

Project manager Nick Bradley, from Midland Heart, said the firm would work with residents to address concerns.

He said the development which would offer a restaurant, bar, shop and fitness centre would "transform the lives of local older people."

Every unit will have its own front entrance door, while bigger apartments will have two bedrooms, with space for wheelchair access.

Call for volunteers

COMMUNITY centre staff have launched an appeal for volunteers. Activities and events at The Hope Centre, Andrew Road, Highfields estate, Halesowen, include English classes, art courses and prayer meetings. Staff are looking for people to give a few hours a week to help.

People are needed to welcome visitors, provide information, office administrations and classroom support. They get training, regular reviews and support. The centre helped with a community clean-up and distributed gifts to less fortunate families. Anyone who can help should call 0121 602 1744 or visit www.hopecentrerevolution.com/home



Sgt Martin Hall and PCSO Ammo Randhawa at the Crime Prevention Cop Shop

Shop for cops set to stay in centre

A TEMPORARY Cop Shop in Halesowen could be made permanent for one day of the week after early success.

Police have been based in a vacant shop in Queensway, for the festive period during this month, but are set to leave this week.

However, Inspector Dez Lambert is considering reopening the store on Saturdays, for the town's busiest shopping day.

He said: "We've had a good response from the town since we opened this month."

"People are able to come in and report crimes while out shopping and we are able to hand out crime prevention advice. It's working well and we're considering keeping it going on Saturdays."

Insp Lambert said officers were able to quickly respond to concerns a card cloner had been put in a cash point in the town thanks to the Cop Shop on Saturday.

He added: "It is just another example of how it has benefited us and the public."

The Cop Shop is based in a former hairdressers called Sensu, near the town centre's bus station.

NEWS in brief

Workers train for peak challenge

WORKERS from a Brierley Hill firm are motoring to be fully fit for a gruelling charity challenge in aid of patients with the bone marrow cancer myeloma.

The group from Auto Styling Truckman, Narrowsbow Way, will tackle the Three Peaks Challenge in June and have set themselves a tough training programme to help generate funds for Myeloma UK. Managing director Mike Wheeler said: "We are very proud of the efforts put in by our staff."

They can be sponsored via www.justgiving.co.uk/autostyling3peaks

Meals at hospital will get overhaul

PATIENT meals are being revamped at Russells Hall Hospital after people were asked to give their views on the service.

A panel of 10 patients and their carers or family members was set up to discuss the food served up. They shared their experience of the meals and let health chiefs know the areas where they were satisfied as well as where they felt improvements could be made.

Now the hospital is looking at providing an improved choice of meals.

Council in plan for apprentices

TWO young people are to get the chance of apprenticeships with Dudley Council under a plan to create the new opportunities with the electrical and mechanical services team.

They will earn a wage working alongside experienced staff to gain skills and qualifications, funded by the National Apprenticeship Service. The scheme will be in partnership with Dudley College.

Support will help tackle bullying

A SUPPORT worker who will help to tackle bullying at schools in Dudley borough is being appointed by the council.

The anti-bullying coordinator will work with teachers and parent to support children facing problems because of bullies. The 12-month contract will cost a maximum of £23,960.

Go-ahead for pub

PLANS for an extension at the George Inn on the corner of Stourbridge Road and High Street, Halesowen have been given the go-ahead.

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NEWS

THE BEST
OF PETER
RHODES

WORST Christmas shock. Waking up and discovering you agree with Piers Morgan.

□□□□□□□□

I ONCE visited a school with its own armed guard, as suggested by America's National Rifle Association (and rightly condemned as idiotic by Morgan). The guard was a jovial, slightly overweight soldier sitting in the sunshine outside the head's study in the town of Kiryat Shmona in northern Israel, with his Armalite assault rifle on his knees. The NRA says all schools should have a guard like this to prevent more school massacres. The snag, of course, is that the psychopath preparing to slaughter children knows exactly what is about to happen but the guard does not. In order to kill the children, the gunman would first shoot the guard. No problem.

□□□□□□□□

A PUZZLE from the sales. Why is it the average till operator can hold on to the winter snuffles for ages and then cough or sneeze straight into a handful of your change?

□□□□□□□□

SIMPLE, isn't it? All you have to do to establish what happened by the main gate to Downing Street is to play the silent CCTV footage of "Plebgate" and try to speak the dialogue between officers and Andrew Mitchell, as reported in the official police log. Paul Merton and Daniel Radcliffe performed it as a playlet on Have I Got News For You (BBC1) and there seemed to be far too many words to fit the time available. David Cameron has had access to the police log and the tape for three months. Did he try making the words fit? If not, why not?

□□□□□□□□

I REFERRED recently to the Queen saving string and wrapping paper at Christmas for the next year's presents. A thought occurred to me as Her Majesty posed for the picture a few days ago with David Cameron's Cabinet. Wouldn't our economy be in better shape if it were in the hands of the 86-year-old lady who saves string, rather than anyone else in the photograph?

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

Bitter brewery memory

A new book on Britain's lost breweries charts some famous names from the West Midlands. **MARK ANDREWS** talks to the author

IT SEEMS incredible to think that anybody would pay nearly £2 million for a brewery and then pour its beer down the drain.

And it certainly turned out not to be a particularly wise move by Greenall Whitley, when it bought Brierley Hill's much-loved J P Simpkins brewery, in 1985.

"It's scandalous really, I don't know why they would have bought it," says Chris Arnot, the author of Britain's Lost Breweries and Beers.

Greenall Whitley was a large regional brewer in the north-west of England, which decided the best way to boost its market share was to buy up the smaller, local brewers. And close them down.

The reaction from Black Country drinkers was hostile to say the least. Mary Arnett, who ran The Castle, Lye, recalls how the pub had been doing a healthy lunchtime trade before the takeover.

"But the regulars didn't like the new beers at all, they liked Simpkins Bitter in particular," she says. "We lost a lot of trade."

The demise of the Simpkins brewery, which was demolished shortly after the Greenall takeover, is one of 30 featured in Arnot's book.

Best

Birmingham-born Arnot is familiar with the Black Country's famous beers, describing how he would regularly visit the region with his father-in-law during the 1970s to sample the likes of Batham's, Holden's and Simpkins.

"For me Batham's is still the best, I can't think of a better beer than Batham's," he says, referring to the brewery which still thrives in Brierley Hill.

During the course of writing the book, Arnot spoke to former Simpkins employees,



An aerial view of the Simpkins brewery in Brierley Hill – it was demolished shortly after the Greenall Whitley takeover

who each have a fascinating tale to tell about their time at the Dennis Brewery behind the Foley Arms – now the New Wellington – pub in Brettell Lane.

Probably the most entertaining story comes from former maintenance man Dennis Hale, who recalled the potency of the brewery's famous Old Ale.

"I remember three gas men working outside the Foley Arms one day and coming in at lunchtime to sample the Old," he tells Arnot.

Joule's of Stone near Stafford was another brewery to suffer after being taken over by a regional giant, having been bought by Bass-Charrington in 1970. Four years after the takeover, Bass decided to close the historic brewery, and transfer production to Burton-upon-Trent.

The closure was not well-received by real ale buffs in the area, with members of the newly formed Campaign for Real Ale branch organising a mock funeral procession

through the streets of Stone. Today a super-market occupies part of the old brewery site.

But the biggest of all the Midland breweries featured in Arnot's book is Mitchell's & Butler's, which in its prime had plants in Smethwick, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

The Wolverhampton plant, which produced Springfield bitter, closed in 1991, and was later hit by a devastating fire, while the M&B headquarters in Cape Hill, Smethwick, closed in 2002.

Fondness

Arnot says one common theme throughout his research was the fondness which many former brewery workers had for their workplaces.

"They really loved their jobs, despite the fact that they were often doing really hard work, moving things around," says Arnot, who is 63. Part of that was down to the fact they had quite a fondness for beer, but I think it was also because the breweries



The former Foley Arms, Brierley Hill – now the New Wellington



Joseph Paskin Simpkins



Author Chris Arnot – regular visits

looked after their workers, in terms of low-rent houses and sponsored sporting events, there was quite an esprit de corps.

"The brewery owners were quite paternalistic, they were the last of their breed."

One of the interesting things that is evident from Arnot's book is that while the breweries have long disappeared, many of the beers have survived – some of them being reintroduced by enterprising micro-breweries.

The Simpkins brand, for example, has been bought by Enville Ales, which produces the ale from its brewery just outside Stourbridge, and Joule's was relaunched by former Bass executive Steve Nuttall at Market Drayton in 2009, with the help of Heeley, who dug out the old recipe. You can still buy a pint of M&B too, although it is now produced by Brain's Brewery in Burton upon Trent, while small independent brewers are now brewing at the Springfield and Highgate sites.

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Charity bid to help save old building

CAMPAIGNERS fighting to save a meeting venue in Halesowen are to set up a charity to help their cause.

The residents are pleading with Dudley Council not to sell the former Sons of Rest building off Alexandra Road.

Instead, they are proposing the venue is reopened and a charitable organisation is established to manage it.

Under the banner of The Hasbury Action Group, the residents are now putting together a business plan and setting up the charity.

Councillor Donella Russell, who is a member of the group, said: "Numerous fundraising activities are now being planned in the new year to raise money for the building."

The campaign group was formed after the former meeting rooms was put on the market by the council.

Councillor Gaye Partridge, cabinet member for human resources, law and governance, said: "The property is still on the market and we are continuing to look at a number of options."

Sport challenge

HALESOWEN College students are planning a Paralympics and Olympics event with German exchange students.

In March the college will be welcoming 20 German exchange students.

Sports lecturer Caroline Nicholson said it would be a challenge.

Tears for navy widow after Arctic Convoy medal victory

Mayor is sent packing



Mayor Melvyn Mottram packs shopping in aid of Victim Support with customer services manager Val Morgan, left, Councillor Christine Perks, Mayoress Michelle Mottram, Bev Carty, from Victim Support and customer Tony Butler

THE Mayor of Dudley helped pack shoppers' bags at a supermarket for charity.

Councillor Melvyn Mottram and his wife Michelle assisted at Sainsbury's in Ambleside, Stourbridge before Christmas. They were joined by volunteers from Victim

Support which has branches in Wolverhampton, Walsall and Dudley. The charity's Wolverhampton service delivery manager, Alan Brown, said: "We really appreciate the efforts put in by the volunteers and the shoppers for handing over the cash."

A CAMPAIGNING widow from Dudley is overjoyed after being told her husband would finally get a war medal for delivering crucial supplies to Russia during the Second World War.

Phyllis Coyle, aged 84, has called for the Royal Navy veterans, including her late husband Mick, who took part in the arctic convoys to get the recognition they deserved.

Prime Minister David Cameron has announced in Parliament that the men who helped take vital fuel, food and munitions to the Eastern Front will get a Arctic Convoy Star.

More than 3,000 seamen were killed in the 78 convoys that delivered supplies to the Red Army to push back the Nazis.

Mrs Coyle, of Derwent Close, Pensnett, lost Mick two years ago to lung cancer when he was aged 85.

Danger

He served as a stoker with the Royal Navy between 1942 and 1947, sailing with four convoys to Russia.

Before he died, he too campaigned for recognition. Mrs Coyle said: "When they called to tell me I cried - it's been 65 years, what a long wait but finally we got it."

"I'm just so sad Mick never saw it, he would have been so happy."

"He and thousands of



Widow Phyllis Coyle

men faced so much danger, but got no recognition from the British Government."

The men had, however, been recognised by the Russian Government, which has sent four medals to Mr Coyle since the war.

On a visit to the country five years ago, Mrs Coyle said they pair were "treated like royalty."

It is thought 66,500 men sailed on the convoys, but only 200 are alive today.

Earlier this year, Mrs



Arctic veteran Mick Coyle

Coyle unveiled a memorial to the sailors at the National Memorial Arboretum in Alrewas.

She was joined by Dudley North MP Ian Austin at the event.

He said: "This is a huge tribute to Phyllis Coyle. She's campaigned tirelessly for greater recognition for the brave men, including her husband Mick, who served on the arctic convoys."

NEWS in brief

New homes plan for fire station

PLANS to demolish a former fire station and build 14 homes in its place have been recommended for approval.

West Midlands Fire Service wants permission to knock down the base in Halesowen to make way for the housing development. It had originally applied to build 22 homes but this proved controversial with residents living near the former station in Hagley Road. More than 40 people signed a petition over traffic fears.

But under the new outline plans, the development would have 12 three and four-bedroom houses, and an access would be created on to Hagley Road.

Students passing on sporting skills

SPORTS students in Halesowen have been sharing their PE skills at a nearby primary school.

Halesowen College organised a week-long series of lessons to pass on their skills to pupils at Newfield Park.

Indoor and outdoor sessions were planned with activities including football, parachute games and athletics.

Sports course leader, Becky Morgan, said: "Everyone had a great time."

Shoebox gifts

STUDENTS at Halesowen College have collected donations to put in 40 shoeboxes to send to soldiers in Afghanistan.

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NEWS

Music man is scent wild by perfume girl's voice



Beth Sherburn at the perfume counter in Merry Hill where she was discovered

SHE'S usually seen behind a perfume counter at the Merry Hill Centre – but Beth Sherburn is on her way to stardom after a record producer overheard her singing at work.

The 21-year-old was at work in Debenhams when she was singing along to a Michael Buble's Christmas classic.

Little did she know that music producer John McLaughlin, behind such acts as Busted, Girls Aloud and Take That, was shopping nearby buying scent for his wife.

He approached her to compliment her on her voice during the trip on November 28, and promptly invited her to work alongside him in his studio.

The 21-year-old from Sedgley has now signed a contract with Purple Circle Records and is set to release a cover of Ordinary World by Duran Duran, her first single, this month.

Chance

Beth, who stayed in her job until Christmas, said the record contract and meeting John McLaughlin is a "dream come true".

"He was just rushing in to get his wife a present so I was very lucky to be in the right place at the right time," she said.

"I am always singing at work – I sing all the time my friends and family can't stop me.

John said: "It was a little miracle as I discovered Beth by chance when I was in Debenhams at Merry Hill. "I rushed in having stayed



Beth's promotional picture

over after a meeting and I wanted to get something for my wife when I heard this girl singing to herself."

He added: "She stopped me in my tracks. I thought she had the most incredible voice. I knew there and then I had to get her into the studio to test out that voice and see if she had real talent."

Beth performed at Birmingham Repertory Theatre with Matthew Kelly and George Costigan in Don Quixote when she was 14. She also sang in a gospel choir with Katherine Jenkins at The Royal Albert Hall.

She's also a talented musician, and plays saxophone, clarinet, guitar and piano.

Beth has since collaborated with songwriter Jud Mahoney, who has worked with some of the world's leading artists.

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LETTERS

Show a little more tolerance

IN response to Mrs Vicky Starkey's (Roper Way, Woodsetton) envious views directed, I am sure, towards only a few motorised "Formula 1" mobility scooters.

Perhaps she should get her own exercise routine instead of joining those lucky enough to be unable to walk.

Thankfully there are only a few able people who display great dexterity in avoiding and disregarding invalids by using a mobile phone whilst walking blindly forward and leaping over a stationary mobility scooter, or even try stretching exercises reaching over

"invisible" invalids trying themselves to reach goods from shelves whilst shopping.

Now a real test of skill, and multi-tasking, try pushing a shopping trolley in one direction whilst looking in another and failing to stop. No problem, trolley pushers have trolley insurance to pay for the damage don't they?

Thankfully lorry drivers do carry insurance but have no need to use it, as in the main, they are courteous enough and aware of problems around them unlike, I stress, a very few mindless pedestrians.

Your comments are directed towards perhaps a couple of incidents and should be reflected in your letter rather than upset the many caring users of mobility scooters. Luckily I am fit enough to walk many miles a day usually looking where I am going and, like the majority of caring people, ready to help those who need help.

You, naturally are not categorised in the mindless few.

Oh, and a Merry Christmas.

BRIAN HAYNES
Wombourne Close
Sedgley

Issues that are bigger than gay marriages

DAVID Cameron Seems more concerned about gay couples marrying than the state this country is in.

He is borrowing billions on top of the billions we are paying interest on and squandering it in aid to countries run by despots whose only rule is by fear.

Then there is this new home for the parasite Qatada who should be in Jordan now, a £400,000 home was not big enough for him.

Dave the marriages you worry so much about will last a hell of a lot longer than yours and Clegg's did.

In a recent letter the question was asked if there were any honest people out there to manage this country in a more robust manner for help in England I think the UKIP just might be that party. Brussels and the laws of the EU have ruled our lives long enough.

J PERKINS
Dudley

LETTERS to the Editor

POST

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Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number of the writer. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

Brilliant production

I HAD the privilege of attending the Dormston School, Sedgley, on Tuesday, December 11, and was entertained with music, drama and some excellent poems and verse, spoken by the by the teaching staff, it was brilliant.

The whole show must have taken so much effort by the staff and boys and girls who performed, such dedication. We hear so much adverse comments about young people today, and it is very refreshing to see these young ones put on such a special effort. My granddaughter Courtney took part, which made me very proud.

Thank you everyone concerned.

B PAYTON, Woodcross Lane, Coseley

Thank you for kindness

I WOULD like to extend my sincere thanks to everyone who helped when my husband was taken ill at B and M Brierley Hill on December 22. We were overwhelmed with offers of help and support. Unfortunately, we do not have anyone's name. However, starting with the gentleman who stopped his car to help, to the various members of B and M staff, customers including the lady who called the ambulance to the technicians who checked my husband over and gave him a clean bill of health, we say a heartfelt thank you.

MRS J NAGINGTON
Blenheim Road, Kingwinford

We don't need the new chiefs for police

I DIDN'T vote for the police commissioner so some might say if you don't vote you can't moan.

Well I'm British and it's my God given right to moan as far as I'm concerned and if the vote had been for whether we wanted a commissioner I'd have been the first at the polling station voting No.

Bob Jones is saying there's no money for officers, there's even less now he's appointed himself an assistant on a grossly over-inflated salary.

This has been a total farce and as usual it's the front-line officers who suffer while the fat cat bureaucrats get the high wage and the workers just have to get on with it. I understand cuts need to be made as Britain spent itself silly under the last Labour government but the Tory cuts are running too deep.

JOHN WHITTERS
Dudley

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NEWS

Generous businessman puts BMX back on track

BMX riders are back on track in Dudley, after a businessman stepped in to replace entrance gates that were stolen by metal thieves.

There had been fears the track on the former Black Horse pub site in Dudley Wood would have to close because of health and safety regulations after its steel gates were stolen in May.

The thieves left behind a £3,500 repair bill and competitions had to be stopped because the gate was used to stop other traffic entering the site when riders were competing.

However, kind-hearted steel business boss Paul Denning has now stepped in and made a new gate, allowing the riders to return.

Ward councillor Jackie Cowell said: "Competitions had to stop after the gate was stolen. It was for keeping out the other traffic and, without being able to do that, we couldn't be sure we could get the ambulances in if we needed them."

It was feared the site would have to be shut down completely to protect the health and safety of its young users but Miss Cowell said: "I think there are plans for more competitions now".

Paul Denning, of Bromsgrove Steel Ltd, Dudley, said: "We're a small company but it wasn't going to cost us a fortune and it wasn't much work on our part."

"We were just glad to help right a wrong," he added.

Youth club celebrations

A GROUP of disabled youngsters from across the Dudley borough celebrated the 15th anniversary of their youth club.

More than 40 staff, club members and parents enjoyed a night of fun and games at Russell's Hall Neighbourhood Centre to mark the milestone. The activities for Rookies Youth Club included a magician, balloon modelling, henna art, face painting, DJ skills as well as refreshments.

Recycling your cards



Andy Newman, Val Morgan and Ann-Marie Gilroy from Sainsbury's are promote Christmas card recycling

STAFF at two supermarkets in Dudley are calling on residents to recycle their unwanted Christmas cards for charity. Sainsbury's stores on Sandringham Way in Ambleside, Stourbridge, and at Merry Hill shopping centre have installed a Christmas card recycling bin for everyone.

The bins will be in place at the entrances to the stores until January 15. Sainsbury's is making a donation to the Forest Stewardship Council based on the volume of cards collected.

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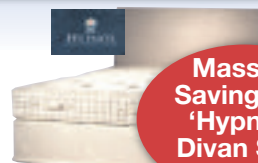


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NEWS

Hair to salon tradition



Wisteria co-owner Avril Watton, left, with stylist Sharon Tudor launch the salon

A HAIR salon has opened in Woodsetton to continue a hair-dressing tradition at the same site spanning for more than five decades.

Wisteria, in Park Road, has opened in the unit formerly occupied by Tracey's, which shut three months ago.

Co-owner Emma Jeavons, who was a stylist at Tracey's, launched the business with her mother-in-law Avril Watton, from Sedgley.

She said: "We are delighted to see the old faces coming back."

"Listening to demand is important for any business, and we have done just that."

"We hope to be here for many years."

Bus lane by museum may be closed permanently

A BUS lane near two of the biggest tourist attractions in the West Midlands could be permanently axed. Officials suspended the lane in Tipton Road, Dudley, when construction work started on the £6 million Dudley Archives.

by Andrew Turton

The dual carriageway is the main route for thousands of commuters to and from Sandwell, Dudley and Wolverhampton each day. It is also the only route linking Dudley Zoo, the Black Country Living Museum and the Castlegate retail park.

Councillor Patrick Harley. Campaigners said bus journey times for people wanting to visit the attractions would be affected if the lane was axed.

The council's new transport chief, Councillor Judy Foster, said: "The bus lane was suspended to improve the capacity of the road during the work to Burnt Tree island, the upgrade to

the signals at the junction of Tipton Road and Birmingham New Road and the works to the Castle Hill site access.

"Now these works are completed, the council will be reviewing the re-introduction of the bus lane."

Public transport pressure group Bus Users UK has previously called into question axing any of the bus lanes in the Tipton Road and Castle Hill area.

It said the roads run freely in off-peak times, suggesting there was not a problem.

But in peak hours the lanes assisted the flow of traffic to ease congestion close to Castlegate island.

Help and advice for the over-50s

AGE UK Dudley will give tips and information about activities for those aged 50 and over at the Westfield Merry Hill shopping centre on January 10 from 9am until 4pm.

Hawthorn Windows



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NEWS

NEWS
in brief**A rocking party for Rockies club**

A GROUP of disabled young people from Dudley celebrated the 15th anniversary of its youth club with a festive party.

More than 40 members of Rockies Youth Club enjoyed the event at Russells Hall Neighbourhood Centre. A magician, balloon modelling and henna art were among the activities. Club staff also combined the party with festive fun and Santa's grotto and the young people provided a short play, singing, dancing and speeches.

For details about how to the club join email sajid.rehman@dudley.gov.uk or call 01384 813937 or 07799 070630.

Training centre for security firm

A SECURITY firm has invested £1 million in creating a training centre and improved facilities at its base in Cradley Heath.

The centre at Cougar Monitoring's headquarters, Sapcote Trading Centre, Powke Lane, is being used for both internal and external training for both suppliers and customers. Cougar, which has 70 employees, supplies security monitoring services.

Director Daren Hill said: "Our new innovative site facilities will ensure that our staff get the very best training available."

Plan for car park

PLANS for a 24-space car park for factories workers at Gibbons Industrial Estate, Dudley Road, Kingswinford, have been lodged with Dudley Council.

Vandalism forces church to close its graveyard at night

A CHURCHYARD that was targeted by vandals will now close overnight in a bid to prevent another attack in future.

More than £14,000 damage was caused to the burial ground at St John the Evangelist Church, in Brockmoor, Brierley Hill.

Yobs destroyed three headstones and crosses on plots in the 19th century churchyard.

The vandalism was carried out in a late-night attack in September.

St John's vicar, the Rev Steve Martin, said the church had been forced to close the burial ground to protect remaining graves.

The churchyard, off Brockmoor High Street, will be shut off between 7pm and 9am each day. Previously people had been able to use the churchyard as a walkway through to the high street shopping area.

Mr Martin said: "Anything that restricts people's freedoms to a public space is unfortunate but in the circumstances we have had no choice."

People in the community have taken this damage to their hearts."

He said the church sought the views of neighbourhood police officers before coming to the decision.

Any people found inside the churchyard during the night and not on official business will be reported.

Mr Martin has asked residents and passers-by to remain vigilant.

The big breakfast club

A NETWORKING event started as a small gathering of firms has marked its seventh anniversary. Stourbridge Breakfast Club is hosted by QualitySolicitors Talbots at Hagley Hall. Organiser James Gwilliams said: "We regularly see over 100 people." Monthly meetings are on the second Wednesday at 7.45am. For details or to attend on January 16 call Emma Rose on 01384 445 850 or email EmmaRose@talbotslaw.co.uk

Generous gestures give hospital goodwill



Staff nurse Jennifer Halford, left, and Rebecca Cottingham with, back from left, Joanne Weston and Stacey Tyler-Crisp

RUSSELLS Hall Hospital has been filled with festive cheer this Christmas thanks to some very generous donations.

Members of Dudley Bliss Group, which helps families of premature babies, dropped off presents for children and their parents.

The families of premature babies were given gift bags which included knitted baby cardigans and hats, chocolates, bibs, feeding bowls and spoons.

The gifts have been bought, donated and made by the group, as well as businesses including the new Kiddicare Store in Merry

Hill. Joanne Weston, from Stourbridge, who helped start the group in 2009, said: "It is an isolating and frightening experience having a baby in neonatal. When our son Huw was in neonatal for his first Christmas six years ago, we were almost unaware of the festivities taking place around us. Receiving gifts on the unit brought a little cheer to the day."

Fitness fundraisers are asking families to give up unwanted Christmas gifts to help the hospital. Toys, games and chocolates can be donated to staff at Energie Fitness



Hospital fundraising co-ordinator Karen Phillips and personal trainer Angela Willington at the gifts collection launch

for Women gym, Old Park Road, Dudley.

It will offer them two weeks' free membership to help their new year resolutions. Once all the gifts are collected, they will be donated to a prize draw to be organised by hospital staff. The project started on Wednesday.

Owner Bal Dhillon said: "We wanted to tap into the enthusiasm for people wanting to get fit as their new year resolution by also helping bring in gifts for the hospital."

To arrange a gift drop-off, visit www.eff.co.uk/dudley or call 01902 678777.

Raid gets 60 bikes from shop

MORE than 60 bikes worth thousands of pounds were stolen from a Sedgley shop in the run-up to Christmas, police have revealed.

Thieves forced open the shutters at BD Price in High Holborn, Sedgley.

The bikes were for all ages and the majority were still in their boxes, police said.

Sergeant Rob Simpson, who covers Sedgley town centre, said: "BD Price is a very familiar name to everyone in Sedgley as the store has been open for more than 100 years."

It is shocking to think that someone has so callously raided the business in what should be their busiest week of the year."

He asked people not to be tempted to buy one if offered one for sale but to get in touch with police by calling 101. They include Mongoose BMXs to Wethepeople mountain bikes.

£87k work for depots

OUTDATED staffrooms and facilities for workers at two council waste depots in Dudley will be given a £87,000 revamp.

Work will be carried out at the Lister Road site to meet health and safety requirements. The facilities, which are said to be in a "poor state", are used by more than 120 workers.

Officials said the Blowers Green site needed a larger "mess facility" for the 52 staff following the introduction of revised working that requires all staff to report back at the depot at around the same time of day.



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NEWS

Rescued artwork there to perk up coffee house



Christian Mather of the Living Rooms Coffee Bar, has given artwork from the Kidderminster Library gallery its first permanent home

A COFFEE bar has rescued artwork from Kidderminster Library after plans to close its gallery were approved.

The Living Rooms Coffee Bar, on Exchange Street, has unveiled 17 works by local artists from the Kidderminster Art Society in its foyer, including watercolours, pastels and acrylics.

Manager Christian Mather, who took over the coffee shop two months ago, saw an opportunity to brighten up his premises while giving the art a permanent home in the town.

He said: "When I heard that they wanted to save the gallery I offered somewhere for them to have a proper home."

"Artwork is part of our community and deserves to have a home. Until now the Kidderminster Arts Society has not had a permanent presence in town and we hope that it is as beneficial to them as it will be for our door."

"We want to show that buying from a local store is better value and by working with the community that supports us, we hope to provide a clear link between our customers and the value we place in their purchases," he added.

The art society's chairman, Clive Betts, helped select and arrange the pictures which are a mixture of landscapes and still-life paintings.

Museum staff thank you

MUSEUM staff in Kidderminster are preparing to say a big "thank you" to volunteers who have given up their time and energy to ensure the town's history goes on display.

The Museum of Carpet officially opened in October and now staff want to praise the volunteers who helped prepare displays and historical details. About 60 people are being invited to the museum for a special celebration between 5pm and 8pm on January 24.

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NEWS

Hundreds of wandering horses taken off streets

MORE than 200 stray horses have been rounded up from the streets of Dudley and Sandwell boroughs after new measures to stop them wandering were introduced.

Both areas have been plagued by the roaming animals causing a nuisance by walking out in front of cars and trampling through gardens. Both councils drew up action plans to tackle the problem.

In Dudley police respond to calls from the public after the council found an ancient by-law giving them the power to remove the animals from roads.

The scheme was originally a six-month trial, launched in April 2011, but has been extended after proving successful. The rescued horses are taken out of the area to be rehomed.

Around 160 had been rounded up during the first year and since then numbers have continued to fall. Police are now being called out to deal with up to four horses a month.

West Midlands Police communications officer Carly Anderson said: "The team are still working with a horse bailiff. There has been a 68 per cent drop in calls about horses. Every single one of the horses taken in has been rehomed."

In Sandwell, bailiffs have been employed by the council to seize the stray animals. It followed complaints about roaming horses kicking over bins and chopping up gardens in Tipton. There were also problems on the Wednesbury Oak Estate. But the move has prompted controversy among horse lovers who have threatened legal action after their pets were seized.

Council spokesman Dave Lawley said: "Since the start of the year 20 stray horses have been collected." Other proposals the council has considered include vets being called to sedate horses to make them easier to catch and secure.

Chimney fire warnings

PEOPLE in Worcestershire are being warned to ensure their chimneys are properly cleaned in the wake of a spate of flue fires. The warnings by Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service follow callouts to five separate chimney fires in one weekend alone.

Life's no drag with cars



Mick Wilkes was on the project for months with his partner Debbie Smith
A CAR fanatic from Dudley has become the first European to compete in a famous American five-day drag race.

Mick Wilkes, travelled to America to drive 1,400 miles across four states and compete in the Hot Rod Drag Week competition.

The 42-year-old, who runs a car customising company in Brierley Hill called Wacky Racers, is an avid fan of drag racing, and when the opportunity arose to enter his car he jumped at it.

It took him seven months to alter his 1978 Vauxhall HA Bedford van, to be competition ready and then he

shipped it over to the States. His partner of 21 years Debbie Smith, 37, helped out with the project, working on the van's bodywork in preparation.

The sleeper van originally would have had a top speed of 72 miles per hour but Mr Wilkes' modification meant its top speed was more than 160 miles per hour.

Mr Wilkes came 18th in his class and his top drag race was 11.52 seconds. He was one of the 56 out of the 91 competitors who actually completed the competition and was presented with the Spirit of Drag Week award.

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Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group

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Contact your GP or GP out of hours service

GP Surgery

For most medical problems phone your GP practice for advice or to make an appointment. You should expect to see a GP within 48 hours.

GPs visit patients at home only if they decide there is a medical need. If your surgery is closed and you need urgent advice or treatment call NHS Direct or the GP out-of-hours service.



GP out of hours service

If you need help outside normal hours, phone your GP and follow the recorded advice or ring 0300 555 4566.

This service is for medical problems too urgent to wait until your own GP practice is next open.

You will be given advice over the phone and if necessary arrangements will be made for you to be seen.

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A&E

Only go to a hospital A&E department in the event of an accident or emergency.

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If you are unsure whether a health problem is an emergency needing A&E treatment then call your GP or NHS Direct for advice.

Call 999 for the ambulance service

999 ambulance

Call 999 for an ambulance if the patient:

- has had chest pains for more than 15 minutes
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- is unconscious
- is bleeding heavily
- is in severe abdominal pain
- bleeding from the vagina and could be pregnant
- is in the final stages of labour
- may have had a stroke, fit or convulsion
- may have taken an overdose
- has severe burns
- has suspected head or spinal injuries
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Further instructions will be given over the phone by a specially trained call taker and, if appropriate, an ambulance will be sent.



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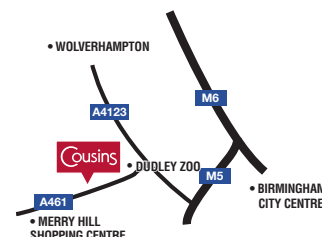
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NEWS

Decision on homes scheme is imminent

A DECISION on a controversial scheme to build 175 homes in village near Stourbridge will be made next week – after the original outcome was deferred.

Hundreds of residents in Hagley have protested against the plans by Cala Homes.

They have also marched on the home of landowner Lord Cobham to air concerns that the influx of new families would push village services beyond breaking point. Many attended a planning committee meeting on December 3.

But the meeting at Bromsgrove District Council had to be cancelled after a barrister who was acting on behalf of both Cilent and Hagley parish councils presented documentation to the committee members.

It claimed that, because the land was earmarked to be removed from the green belt for development, a public forum would need to rule upon whether it was economically, socially and environmentally "sustainable" before any planning application was decided.

Now Bromsgrove District Council will discuss the plans on January 7 and The chairman of Hagley Parish Council has urged residents to turn out to a meeting.

Steve Colella said: "The objections have been loud and clear – over 1,400 letters of objection and a 4,000-name petition can't all be wrong."

Seven super slimmers see in the New Year as new men

THESE Magnificent Seven super slimmers saw the New Year in as new men.

By swapping fatty foods for fresh fruit and veg the Black Country seven lost more than 40st between them.

Carer and chef **Glen Willetts**, aged 52, of Cradley Heath, lost more than 8st and lost 12ins from his waistline after being referred to a slimming class by his doctor two years ago.

Changes to his lifestyle including switching to skimmed milk, eating plenty of vegetables and healthy breakfasts.

He said: "I feel a lot better, and I love being able to buy more fashionable clothes."

He was tipping the scales at 22st 7lb but now weighs 13st 10lbs.

Swimming

Father-of-seven **Keith Darnley**, aged 52, of Hasbury, Halesowen, had to use a mobility scooter before deciding to lose weight.

But after dropping more than 8st he goes swimming and walking, and took part in the Halesowen Fun Run.

He said he swapped McDonalds breakfasts for cereals with yogurt and fruit or wholemeal toast with mushrooms and tinned tomatoes. He used to weigh 22st 10lb but now weighs 14st 3lb.

Hospitality operations manager **Kevin Herbert**, aged 39, of Quinton, lost 4st after joining Slimming World. He said: "Losing the weight has given me more con-



Keith Darnley, 52



Glen Willetts, 52



Adrian Harper, 40



Chris Heathcock, 42



Kevin Herbert, 39



Jonathan Lowe, Kevin Herbert, Adrian Harper, Glen Willetts, Keith Darnley, David Lacey, and Chris Heathcock have lost 40 stone between them at slimming classes



David Lacey, 60, who lost four stones



Jonathan Lowe, 31, lost five stones

fidence." He added: I am considering a triathlon next year."

He dropped from 20st 11lb to 16st 10lbs.

Steelworker **Chris Heathcock**, aged 42, of Hob Green, Stourbridge lost 4st 2.5lbs. His waistline went from 44 ins to 34. He joined Slimming World in January and

got to his target weight in 11 months by eating more healthily and exercising. He said: "I'm so much more active now. I've even taken up cycling with my daughters Caitlin and Lauren."

Architect **Jonathan Lowe**, aged 31, of Halesowen, lost 5st. He switched from cheese sandwiches

and pasties at lunch, to soups and salads. He went from 19st 12lbs to 14st 12lbs.

Electrical engineer **Adrian Harper**, aged 40, of Lutley, Halesowen, lost 4st 1lb. He said: "I feel like a different person."

He used to weigh 18st 1lb but now weighs 14st.

David Lacey, aged 60, of Oldswinford, cut down on white bread and beer to lose more than 4st. His weight dropped from 17st 9lbs to 12st 12lbs.

Kerry Morgan of Slimming World, said: "These men are our Magnificent Seven. We are very proud of their achievements."

Students box clever with help for school

BUDDING engineers at a Cradley Heath school have created a series of interactive boxes to help pupils at a special school find their way round their building.

The students from Ormiston Forge Academy, Wrights Lane, presented the boxes to Meadows Sport College, Oldbury, at a recent ceremony.

The boxes use literacy symbols to depict a room's function, along with an engraving of the room's name and a button to press to hear it.

Forge students also decided to use the Dudley Road school's colours on the boxes along with an engraved logo.

Meadows principal Gordon Phillips said: "For our students, to be able to find and identify rooms and areas in the school is a learning experience."

"These boxes will have a huge impact on the lives of the children at our school."

Ormiston principal Andrew Burns said: "The opportunity to do something like this with a real life purpose has made a difference to both schools."

"They are now starting to work together to the benefit of both, and we will be doing more."

Forge student Usama Meraj demonstrated the boxes to the group.

She said the boxes would help the students to develop.

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Monday	Start	Time	Fee
Craft - Jewellery Making	07/01/13	7pm-9pm	£45.00
Music - Keyboard for Beginners (3 weeks)	14/01/13	7pm-9pm	£13.50
Pottery - All Abilities	07/01/13	7pm-9pm	£45.00
Yoga - for Leisure	07/01/13	7pm-9pm	£33.75
Yoga and Meditation	07/01/13	7pm-9pm	£45.00
Tuesday	Start	Time	Fee
Computers for Beginners - Internet and Email	08/01/13	7pm-9pm	£45.00
Crafts - Black Country	08/01/13	7pm-9pm	£45.00
Drama - All Levels	08/01/13	7pm-9pm	£45.00
Music - Guitar 'Learn from the Legends'	08/01/13	7pm-9pm	£45.00
Photography - All Levels	08/01/13	7pm-9pm	£45.00
Pilates	08/01/13	7pm-8pm	£22.50
Wednesday	Start	Time	Fee
Art - Water Colour Painting - All Levels	09/01/13	7pm-9pm	£45.00
Dancing - Latin American - Beginners	09/01/13	5.30-7pm	£33.75
Dancing - Latin American - Intermediate	09/01/13	7pm-9pm	£45.00
French - Conversation - Beginners (3 weeks)	09/01/13	7pm-9pm	£13.50
French - Conversation - Improvers	09/01/13	7pm-9pm	£45.00
Friday	Start	Time	Fee
Art - How To Draw and Paint	11/01/13	2.45-4.45pm	£45.00
Art - Water Colour Painting - Intermediate	11/01/13	1.50-4.50pm	£67.50
Genealogy - Family History - Introduction	11/01/13	2.15-4.15pm	£45.00

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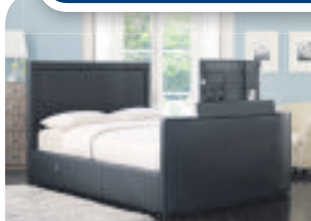
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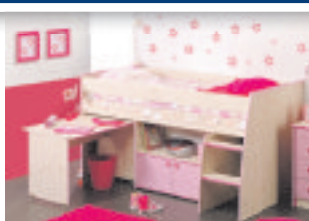
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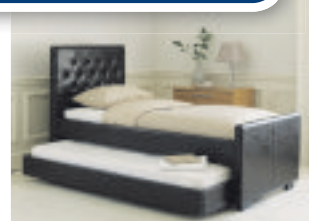
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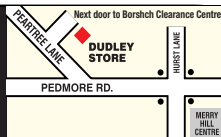
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NEWS

Clive hands over cheque to lifesaving 999 service

A FORMER worker at a Kidderminster welding firm who nearly died when a pressure vessel blew up has handed over a cheque to the Midlands Air Ambulance which helped save his life.

Clive Danty lost both legs in the accident which happened in December last year. He was left in a coma for six weeks and spent 11 months in hospital recovering.

But although he relies on a wheelchair and needs regular hospital visits, he has made considerable progress.

He has handed over a cheque for £600 to the Midlands Air Ambulance following a fundraiser at his favourite pub in September.

"They did not expect me to live," said the 50-year-old father of two. "I don't remember anything about the accident. I just remember waking up in hospital two months after it happened."

"I have had so much help from the best doctors."

Hundreds of people attended a music festival at Mr Danty's local, The Swan in September.

Thanks to the Midland Air Ambulance, doctors got Mr Danty to the QE Hospital quick enough to save his life.

Mr Danty, of Bewdley Road, Kidderminster, said: "It's not cheap to run helicopters, and they are well-trained staff. Without them I would be dead."

Brendan Sheehy, owner of the pub in Vicar Street, said: "What the air ambulance did on that day was brilliant."

Deadline for registering

PARENTS in Worcestershire are being reminded they have until January 15 to register their four-year-olds for a school reception place.

This is deadline for places for next September and parents can register via website www.worcestershire.gov.uk/schooladmissions.



Sofia Voutianitis, front right, of the Midlands Air Ambulance, receives a cheque from The Swan's manager Anthony Sheehy, left, and Clive Danty, watched by staff members and regulars from the pub

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MNA Media

Suggs to play town

MADNESS singer Suggs will be taking to the stage in Dudley for his one-man show. Tickets are on sale for the gig at Dudley Town Hall on April 19.

The 51-year-old singer, actor, former radio DJ, television and radio personality will use words and music to tell the story of his life.

Fans of his music will also be kept entertained, as the chart-topping singer has promised that there will be a selection of songs scattered throughout the show.

It has already proved a hit with audiences up and down the country. Visit www.dudley.gov.uk

Campaigner's call to close alleyway following fatal attack turned down

AN ALLEYWAY where Shane Watson was attacked and later died will not be closed, despite a campaign by relatives and friends.

Dudley Council made the decision after a police survey found 15 per cent of residents backed the call. Mr Watson, aged 23, was attacked in the alleyway at Springfield Grove, Sedgley, while on his way home from a night out in the town.

He later died of head injuries in hospital. Mr Watson's cousin Scott Maher-Butler said: "The problem with a survey of the estate is that there will always be people at the top end who use

it and will want it. People at the bottom end know the problems it causes.

"I know the council have cut back the trees, but it could have been so much better – how are they going to stop scooters going up there?"

He said the decision will bring no comfort to the family, who are still grieving. He added: "Christmas is coming up, his mother is upset, and his dad is doing the best he can."

The council said it was now working closely with police to monitor anti-social behaviour in the area.

Cabinet member Councillor Judy Foster said: "We have worked closely with police partners to

carefully consider this issue before making any decisions following the tragic death of Shane.

"We have listened to the concerns of the family and also consulted local community and local ward members, and feedback from them confirmed that this alleyway is well used by people locally and therefore on balance should remain open."

Last month, James Cartwright, 18, of Sandyfields Road, pleaded guilty to murdering Mr Watson.

Co-defendant Shylon Wishart, 19, of North Springfield, denies the same charge.

Wishart will go on trial in the new year.



Shane Watson

Police want to find 'gent'

POLICE investigating a theft from a chemist in Kingswinford have narrowed have a suspect they would like to interview.

Officers had released images of three people in relation to the theft of make-up and perfume at Boots in Market Street.

Following the appeal, police say they have eliminated a man and woman from the investigation.

They now just want to talk to one man. He is described as tall and stocky. He was dressed as a country gentleman, wearing a flat cap, dark green jacket and brown shoes.

New supermarket peaks into skyline



The Tesco Store at the site of the old Crown Centre, in Stourbridge, where steelwork has now gone up

A MULTI-MILLION pound Tesco supermarket has started rising into the Stourbridge town centre skyline.

The steel framework can now be seen on the development site, off the ring road.

It's the first change in the skyline since the rubble left from the demolition of the old Crown Centre and Bell Street car park was cleared.

Contractors have been busy completing the foundations and work on the underground car park.

But now some of the structure of the new store can be seen on the site. Peter Cox, president of Stourbridge Chamber of Trade, said: "It's been going well and they've made good progress. Another few months and we will be able to see it come together. It's going to make a big difference to the site."

Hoardings

Posters advertising the opening of the new store next winter went up on hoardings all around the plot in November. Tesco have previously said they want the store to open in time for Christmas 2013. Work to knock down the old Crown Centre began in March and was completed in May.

The car park was brought down using explosives on April 1. Landrovers cleared 9,000 tons of rubble, some of which will be re-used in the building, ready to construct the shopping complex.

The new supermarket will create 320 jobs and more than 250 people have already expressed an interest in working at the store.

It's part of a £30 million development which will include a new shopping centre and a town square.

Runaway horse ends up in swimming pool

A HORSE plunged into a swimming pool after escaping from its stables at a home near Kidderminster.

The six-year-old horse called Freya was found standing in the circular pool in around 4ft of water.

Fire crews were called to rescue the animal at the home in Cleobury Road between Far Forest and Cleobury Mortimer.

They found the animal could not climb out of the pool without help due to the steepness of the swimming pool walls. Firefighters pumped water out of the pool following the call out on December 17.

Crews said they had to keep the animal calm during the 90 minute rescue. They used straw bales taken from the nearby stable to begin building steps down into the pool.

Once secure, the horse was then led up from the bottom of the pool which had been drained.

Crew Commander Debbie Davies from Hereford and Worcester Fire Service, said: "The horse, called Freya, was a calm horse and certainly could not have climbed out of the pool unaided."

"Freya climbed out of the pool safely and returned to her stable, thankfully she was none the worse for her adventure," she added.

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Tues 12th Mar. 19.00-21.00. 3 wks. £21.90 #

AROMATHERAPY

Tues. 22nd Jan. 19.00-21.00. 3 wks. £21.90 #

INDIAN HEAD MASSAGE

Tues 12th Feb. 19.00-21.00. 3 wks. £21.90 #

MEDITATION Thurs 31st Jan. OR Thurs 7th Mar 19.00-
20.30. Both 4 wks. £21.90 # **Short'N'Sweet**

FITNESS YOGA @ Oakfield **Short'N'Sweet**
Fri 11th Jan. 11.15-12.30. 5 wks. £26.80 #

FITNESS GLIDING @ Oakfield **Short'N'Sweet**
Fri 15th Feb 11.15-12.15. 6 wks. £25.90 #

PILATES

Beginners: Thurs 10th Jan 18.00-19.00, 11 wks. £33.35 #
Beg. @ Oakfield: Fri 11th Jan. 10.00-11.00, 10 wks. £36.40 #
Improvers: Tues 8th Jan. 19.00-20.00, 11 wks. £33.35
Improvers: Wed 9th Jan. 18.30-19.30, 11 wks. £33.35
Improvers: Thurs 10th Jan. 19.05-20.05, 11 wks. £33.35
Improvers: Thurs 10th Jan. 20.10-21.10, 11 wks. £33.35

LEGS, BUMS & TUMS

Tues 8th Jan. 20.05-21.05, 11 wks. £33.35

BALLROOM AND LATIN AMERICAN DANCING

All classes start Mon. 7th Jan. for 11 wks. Beginners 18.30-19.30,
£36.10. Improvers/ Intermediates 19.30-20.45, £45.10

ADULT SWIMMING LESSONS

All courses begin Mon 7th Jan. for 11 wks. £33.40.
Beginners: 19.00-19.45. Improvers: 19.45-20.30.
Intermediates: 20.30-21.15

PRIVATE SWIMMING LESSONS

In a group of 2 or 1 to 1. Contact the office for further details

RLSS NATIONAL POOL LIFEGUARD

18th Feb 2013, 8th Apr 2013, 29th July OR 5th August 2013.
All 8.30-17.00. 6 days. £173.75 plus additional fees £78.75

RLSS NATIONAL RESCUE TEST for SWIMMING

TEACHERS/COACHES 1 day retake; Mon 22nd July 2013
subject to previous qualification and training £36.90, add. fees
£26.95. Full course: Tues 23rd July and Wed 24th July 2013,
8.30-16.00, £57.80, add. fees £26.95.

DUDLEY MBC INDUCTION

TRAINING FOR POOLSIDE ASSISTANTS
Mon 7th Jan. OR Mon 17th June 2013 Both 9.00-12.00 £18.40

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Fri. 8th Feb. OR Sat. 23rd Mar. Both 09.00-16.00. 1 day. £36.90

PAEDIATRIC EMERGENCY FIRST AID

Sat 9th Feb. OR Fri. 22nd Mar. Both 09.00-13.00. 1/2 day £24.55

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Tues 29th Jan 19.00-21.00 8 wks. £41.30 #

INTRO. TO TRADING ON THE STOCK MARKET

Mon. 21st Jan 19.00-21.00 4 wks £20.70 #

BUYING AND SELLING ON E-BAY

Wed 23rd Jan. 9.30-11.30. Mon 4th Mar. 19.00 -21.00 All 4 wks.
£29.15. #

COMPUTING for the TERRIFIED

Learn to use a computer from scratch! Day and evening 4 wk
courses start Mon 21st Jan. 19.00 -21.00 OR Wed. 6th Mar. 9.30-
11.30. £29.15 #.

New New New

AN INTRO TO: FLOWER ARRANGING Tues 22nd Jan. 14.30-16.30.
FLORISTRY Tues 12th Feb. 14.30-16.30.
FLORAL CRAFTS Tues 12th Mar. 14.30-16.30.
All 3 wks. £27.90 Cons. £22.45 and £11 #

LEARN TO SCULPTURE IN STONE
Thurs 7th Feb. 19.00-21.00. 6 wks. £48.50 #

Phone us to add your name to our 'I'm interested list' for:

BEGINNERS GUIDE: APPLE MAC COMPUTERS

Mon 13th May 19.00-20.30. 6 wks. £43.70 #

SOCIAL MEDIA: FACEBOOK, TWITTER, SKYPE, YOU TUBE. WHATS THE FUSS?

Tues. 7th May 19.00-20.30. 6 wks. £43.70 #

COMMUNITY SESSIONS

ADULT SWIMMING: Mon. 11.50-12.35, Tues. 19.00-20.00,
Thurs. 19.00-20.15. All £2.60

AQUAFIT: Wed. 12.15-13.00, Fri. 11.50-12.35. £2.60.
Wed. 19.00-20.00, Sun. 9.00-10.00. £3.70

FITNESS SWIM Mon. 18.00-18.45. £1.60 for 10-19 yrs olds
Community programme starts 7th Jan No sessions 17th Dec to 6th Jan. inc.
More information? 07963 986672, OR 141communitygroup@hotmail.co.uk

ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**PLAY THE GUITAR**

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16.45-17.45 OR 17.45-18.45. £52.50
Intermediates: Thurs 10th Jan..
17.45-18.45. 11 wks. £48.40

LEARNING 4 LIFE SWIM SCHOOL

TERM DATES : Mon 7th Jan.-Thurs 28th Mar. 2013 excluding
Mon 18th Feb. to Sun 24th Feb. 2012. Mon to Thurs 11 wks. Fri
Sat, Sun 10wks

	10 WKS	11 WKS
COST: First Steps, Pre Beg, Beg, Improve.	£41.00	£45.10
Intermediates 1, 2 and 3	£35.50	£39.05
Rookie, W. Skills, L'saving, S & Swim	£44.50	£48.95

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Improver: Improves aquatic skills and stamina to swim 15m on a front stroke and 15m back crawl.

Intermediate 1: Develops confidence in deep water and front crawl breathing action to swim 20 meters on a front stroke and 20m back crawl.

Intermediate 2: Helps to build stamina and endurance to swim 50m on a front stroke and 25m on back crawl.

Intermediate 3: Develops competence on all four strokes (25m) and a front and back stroke for 100m.

Water Skills: To develop survival and rescue skills.

Rookie Lifeguard: Learn new skills, have fun and overcome challenges. Min. age 9 years. Must be able to swim 20 m on a front stroke and 20 m on a back stroke.

Survive & Swim: Min age 11.5 years. Must be able to swim 20m on a front stroke and 20 m on a back stroke. Develops water safety knowledge, first aid, self rescue, survival skills, lifesaving techniques. Can test speed and stamina in a competitive situation. Reg. fee £23.95.

THE SMALL PRINT

January courses May be subject to availability. When you call we will either register your interest. OR if places are available confirm your booking and take payment.

What is Short'N'Sweet?

An introductory taster course of 6 hrs in a small group

Holiday Dates: Learning4Life is closed from Fri 21st Dec. to Sun. 6th Jan. with limited opening from 16th -24th Feb.

This programme is subject to change: particularly if we are unable to recruit minimum class numbers

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Dudley
Metropolitan Borough Council

NEWS

Recession hits collections

ALMOST half a million pounds was raised across the region for the Poppy Appeal – but latest figures released by the Royal British Legion reveal the final total is likely to reveal the effect of the recession.

Fundraisers are already predicting there has been a drop on the previous year, which was the appeal's 90th anniversary. The total received by the South Staffordshire branch, which includes most areas of the Black Country, is £447,849, down from £477,891 last year.

In West Bromwich, collections dropped from £8,803 to this year

£5,958, in Cannock it dipped from £11,581 to £7,518, in Walsall it fell from £21,746 to £16,251 and Tipton it went from £22,198 to £21,129.

However, in Dudley collections rose from £15,775 to £22,424 from this year's appeal and in Wolverhampton the pot swelled from £9,425 to £12,623.

Gratitude

Dudley fundraiser Malcolm Davies said this year's total was a record amount for the branch.

He said: "All thanks and gratitude must go to the kind people of Dudley and the businesses, shops and schools who were, without doubt, even more generous than usual."

"The collection has nearly tripled

over the past three years at the Dudley branch but we desperately need younger members to continue with this success."

Alison Bates, community fundraiser for South Staffordshire, said the overall dip in collections reflected the hard economic times.

She said: "We are a charity and are bound by what people give us. If people are struggling and have less cash spare we can't do anything about it."

"We are looking over the next four years to increase the people we help from 165,000 to 500,000."

A national event is being held to mark the 70th anniversary of the Dambusters on May 18.

Robbery ruled a factor in death of lorry driver

A CORONER said the stress of a Polish lorry driver being robbed of his £250,000 load is likely to have led to his death.

Bogdan Bartczak, aged 57, was dragged on to parkland off Vale Road in Dudley after he collapsed while his lorry was being robbed. He was found dead at 6.50am on November 1, 2010 an inquest was told.

Thieves targeted Mr Bartczak's lorry which contained 227 flat screen TVs – before abandoning it at the Vectra Industrial Estate in Whites Road, West Bromwich. Black Country Coroner Robin Balmain said: "Mr Bartczak's death was due to natural causes likely to have been induced by the stress of the robbery to which he was subjected."

The inquest at Smethwick Coroner's

Court heard from the senior investigating officer, Det Con David Breckenridge. He said: "He had parked his vehicle behind Oldbury Magistrates' Court and the gang had made their way to the scene and identified the lorry as a high value target."

"The circumstances of the taking of the lorry are still a bit hazy. He was bundled into the rear of a vehicle and the lorry was taken in a different direction."

Only six of the TVs were recovered – the rest of the £250,000 haul was never found.

Police have admitted they may never find out the truth about what happened.

A pathology report read by the coroner had noted the Polish man's "severely abnormal heart" and had recorded the likely cause of his death as ischemic heart disease.

Icy wake-up from police

POLICE in Kidderminster gave a frosty wake-up call to local motorists who had left their vehicles running to clear the ice while they waited in the warm.

A special operation was launched in the town after a spate of car thefts in North Worcestershire. Four Kidderminster motorists who risked leaving their vehicles running and unattended on driveways while they defrosted got a knock on the door from police.

The police took the keys from the vehicles and handed them safely to the owners, who were inside their homes.

Farewell after four decades



Nursery teacher Dorinda Garner with pupils and staff at Red Hall Primary

A TEACHER who has taught generations of children is bidding farewell after 40 years at the same school.

Dorinda Garner, known as Drin, has dedicated her career to teaching at Red Hall Primary School in Lower Gornal.

The 61-year-old has taught a variety of age groups since she started at the school in 1972. But after teaching nursery children for the past 16 years, Mrs Garner has decided to retire as the school breaks up for

Christmas. Mrs Garner, of The Broadway, Dudley, plans to spend more time with her family including her six-month-old granddaughter Bonnie.

She said: "I feel very blessed to have worked with the children here all these years."

"I'm actually teaching the grandchildren of the children I taught when I first started. I have enjoyed time at the school very much."

Health consultation hits another delay

HEALTH chiefs have further delayed a public consultation on its review of services in Worcestershire.

Residents will now have to wait until next summer to air their views on the controversial review in a three-month consultation. Services across Worcestershire are under scrutiny by bosses who say there is a growing gap between the demand for healthcare and the available funding.

They are predicting a £200 million shortfall in budgets by 2014/15 – resulting in the need for a review. But the plans have sparked controversy from campaigners determined not to lose further services from Kidderminster following the closure of the A&E department in 2000.

The consultation had been due to start imminently but bosses announced these plans had been delayed. The proposals will be finalised this month with the consultation due in the summer.

NHS Worcestershire chief executive, Eamonn Kelly, said: "We are very conscious that people in Worcestershire are looking to us to confirm the detail of the proposals for change and we want to do this as soon as possible."

Path work is promised

PARENTS who have complained about having to take their children along a muddy pathway to reach a recently opened £4 million school at Chaddesley Corbett have been told action is being taken to solve the problem.

The footpath, which follows a farm track and field edge for the majority of its length, provides a pedestrian link from the village to the recently completed Endowed Primary School in Chaddesley Corbett.

Officials with the County Council Countryside Service said some remedial work will be carried out.



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20

• January •

Mo	7	14	21	28
Tu	1	8	15	22
We	2	9	16	23
Th	3	10	17	24
Fr	4	11	18	25
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• March •

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• May •

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• July •

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• September •

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• November •

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13

• February •

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• April •

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• June •

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• August •

August						
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• October •

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• December •

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CLUB NEWS

Choir and soloist in fine voice at service

WEST
MIDLANDS
FEDERATION OF
TOWNSWOMEN

THE West Midlands Federation of Townswomen's Guilds held its annual carol service on December 8 at St Thomas's Church Stourbridge.

The service was well attended and enjoyed by the congregation.

Chairman Margaret Brookes welcomed invited guests the Lady Mayoress of Dudley, Michelle Motttram and the Federation President Jan Wynn.

Lay minister Hilary Savage led the service and the organist was John Payne.

Wollaston Guild choir and their soloist Ann Tomlinson sang a selection of seasonal hymns and carols. Also 'Les Oiseaux' a local choir from Brierley Hill sang their selection of carols.

The Federation chairman Margaret Brookes thanked everyone for attending and invited them to the Church Hall for tea and mince pies following the service.

We hope everyone had a very Merry Christmas. We would also like to take the opportunity to wish everyone a Happy and healthy New Year from everyone within the West Midlands Federation along with our good wishes for 2013.

Cheque handed out to Promise Dreams



Previous chairman Isabel Mason with Amy Johnson, from Promise Dreams

HIGHGATE LADIES
PROBUS CLUB

THE club held its Christmas meeting on December 10. Entertainment was provided by club members Sylvia Aston and Isabel Mason who are both trained singers and sang Christmas carols and songs from the shows.

The members were invited to join in and did so with gusto. Another club member Jean Davies gave a humorous Christmas

reading. During the meeting a cheque for £100 was presented to Amy Johnson a representative from Promise Dreams, the chosen charity of last year's chairman Isabel Mason, and which supports sick children.

Members in festive mood

MEMBERS were in festive mood at the December meeting.

Four guests were welcomed and Josie Smith was thanked for providing lovely seasonal floral arrangements.

It emerged that work had begun on building a well for

K'FORD
TOWNSWOMEN

a family in Cambodia. When completed it will bear a plaque with the guild's name.

Following the necessary business the various sections announced their forth-

coming events. Mince pies and mulled wine were then served ahead of the main event.

Catherine Taberner and her accompanist Ian Chamberlain entertained with songs from the shows and some seasonal numbers. Kath Turner gave thanks.

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NEWS

Four saved from river

FOUR people had to be rescued from a river in Dudley after a woman jumped into the water followed by three men who tried to get her out.

Fire crews were called to Mill Race Lane, Stourbridge, at around 8.15pm on January 1 after the group became stranded on a riverbank.

The woman, who had been drinking, jumped into the river first. The three men followed to try and rescue her – only to get stuck themselves.

Firefighters from Stourbridge, Smethwick and a water rescue team were dispatched along with paramedics. An extendable ladder was used to bring all four to safety.

They were given first aid by paramedics.

Old gates given facelift

GATES at the site of the old Corbett Hospital in Stourbridge have been renovated following calls from campaigners.

About £5,000 has been spent sprucing up the gates at



Councillors Dave Tyler and Christine Perks in front of recently-restored gates

what was the entrance to the former hospital.

Campaigners said the light blue ornate wrought iron gates, in High Street, Amblescote, were in a desperate state of repair.

They had become rusty and badly bent, after a car was thought to have hit them, prompting ward councillor Christine Perks to raise their plight.

She was aided by Councillor Dave Tyler to trace ownership through borough artist Steve Field to Dudley NHS.

Smartened

Health service bosses ordered a clean-up which has now been completed. Councillor Perks said: "They really have been smartened up, which is great."

The Corbett site is now managed by Dudley NHS, and the Stourbridge Health and Social Care Centre is based there.

Dudley NHS spokesman Lindsey Harding said the organisation had found cash in its capital programme to cover the cost.

The work on the gates, which are more than 100 years old, has also been welcomed by local historians.

Corbett Hospital, now an outpatients' centre, has been rebuilt in nearby Vicarage Road.

Olympic hero Kristian said no to jungle jape

OLYMPIC star Kristian Thomas has mixed with royalty but has revealed he had turned down the chance to become King of the Jungle.

The gymnast who trains in Halesowen, won team bronze and met and chatted with the Duchess of Cambridge at London 2012, admitted he rejected I'm A Celebrity...Get Me Out Of Here.

The 23-year-old is in high demand after his Olympic success but he chose not to follow team-mate Louis Smith, who won Strictly Come Dancing last week, into reality TV – just yet.

He is in the World Cup series in the US and Japan – after finishing in the top seven in the all-around competition at the Games – and the British Championships in March and April.

Kristian decided against the ITV show, won by ex-Eastenders actress Charlie Brooks, to focus solely on sport.

"I was asked for I'm A Celebrity. I would like to do something like that but it's the wrong time in my career," he said.

Fellow bronze medallist gymnast Beth Tweddle is in ITV's Dancing On Ice after retiring.

"Prior to it you need four weeks before it happens to do the media commitments, then you're out there for however long."

"Then it's another month or so filling the rest of the commitments for it so you're suddenly out of the gym for four or five months."

"With everything starting so early next year I couldn't afford to have the time off."

"It would be good fun to do but it wasn't the right time to be trying it."

The ex-pupil of St Edmund's Catholic School, Wolverhampton, trains at Earls Gymnastics Club, Halesowen, and Lillishall, National Sports Centre, Shropshire.

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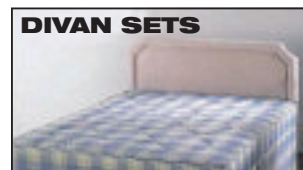
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What's On! Halesowen

Take That star rules the Civic

Gary Barlow,
Wolverhampton Civic Hall
THE man behind million-selling love songs and the success of Take That in two centuries had a triumphant sell-out concert in Wolverhampton on Sunday night.

The majority female audience were left more than satisfied as Gary Barlow and his band belted out the hits for two hours. Barlow last played the venue 21 years ago when Take That were on their way to the top. He promised he would not leave it that long for his next Wolverhampton gig, appearing touched by the reaction of an audience he described as "awesome".

Opening with Greatest Day set the bar high but genial Barlow, clad in black suit and tie, surpassed it with ease, stirring the memories of middle aged former teenyboppers with A Million Love Songs and busting Take That dance moves during Pray. "I still got it," he gasped.

A selection of covers included his version of Forever Autumn and a festive Fairytale Of New York with NYC singer and support act Nell Bryden.

The concert hit the heights after an interval with the big Take That hits. The other four were not missed much, even that Robbie fellow. The gig reached a crescendo with The Flood, Patience, Back For Good, Candy, Shine and Rule The World. Gary returned in a spangled jacket for Never Forget. The fans will never forget this gig. **Leon Burakowski**

The West End coming to West Midlands theatres

THIS is the year that the West End comes to the West Midlands with several of the most popular stage shows of recent decades coming to theatres in the region during 2013.

Birmingham Hippodrome leads the way with a trio of blockbusters for the spring, summer and autumn - Andrew Lloyd Webber's The Phantom of the Opera, Disney's The Lion King and the National Theatre's acclaimed production of War Horse.

Hippodrome chief executive Stuart Griffiths said: "Following a huge programme of refurbishment and the complete replacement of our stage, we now look forward to what promises to be the busiest year in our history with three of the biggest theatrical successes of recent times."

Simba

Impresario Cameron Mackintosh's new touring production of The Phantom of the Opera, with Earl Carpenter as the romantic masked anti-hero, is at the theatre from March 13 to May 14.

Musical blockbuster, The Lion King, brings its cast of more than 50 performers

by Leon Burakowski

from more than 17 countries when the story of Simba is staged from June 29 to September 28.

Hugely popular play War Horse, based on Michael Morpurgo's First World War-set novel, comes complete with its amazing life-sized puppet horses to the Hurst Street venue from October 17 to November 9.

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre also has an impressive line-up for the new year. Highlights include a revival of Lloyd Webber's spectacular feline musical Cats, including the classic song Memory, from March 19 to 30, and Ghost The Musical from June 3 to 15.

One of the biggest and brashiest shows of the year at the New Alexandra Theatre in Birmingham will be Aussie drag musical Priscilla Queen of the Desert, with Jason Donovan getting back into his high heels to revisit his West End starring role from March 18 to 30.



Andile Gumbi as Simba in the London version of Disney's The Lion King, the show with music by Elton John is coming to Birmingham *Photo by Johan Persson*



Earl Carpenter as The Phantom and **Katie Hall as Christine** in The Phantom of the Opera UK Tour, coming to Birmingham this spring *Photo by Alistair Muir*

Brian is king of panto land

Robinson Crusoe & the Caribbean Pirates, Birmingham Hippodrome

BRIAN Conley's early exit from I'm A Celebrity meant he couldn't become King of the Jungle, but he's become King of Panto in Birmingham instead.

Singer, hooper and comedian Conley brings enormous energy to a swashbuckling pantomime that, with a car flying over the audience and a roaring sea monster, must be one of the most spectacular in the UK.

Even suffering a cold, Conley lit up the theatre with his manic mirth and unpredictable antics. After a video prologue set in Brum, Conley started the show with a sight gag that had the audience howling with laughter. He remained in top gear throughout director Michael Harrison's laugh-a-minute production.

There was lots of slapstick. Perky Kathryn Rooney, as pretty Polly, went beyond the call of panto duty when Conley's singing whilst munching an apple saw her pebble-dashed in macerated fruit.

Andrew Ryan was a dame to remember in a dozen different deranged costumes and Lesley Joseph had lots of good lines as the glamorous Enchantress of the Ocean, though she talked rather than sang her songs.

Conley's treasure island antics continue until January 27. **LB**

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CHOICE



Richard Hammond's Secret Service BBC1, 6.30pm
Wipeout may be no more, but clearly the Beeb love having Richard Hammond as the face of teatime BBC1. So this week we welcome the Top Gear veteran for a new series which exploits the Candid Camera format. The news about this series broke last May, so "Hamster" fans have had a long wait to see the finished product. It sees him being hired by members of the public to play pranks on their family and friends. A team of actors and comedians dubbed his "secret service" will be on hand to ensure those hilarious japes have us clutching our sides.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. 10.00 Saturday Kitchen Live. 11.30 Baking Made Easy. (R) 12.00 BBC News: Regional News. Weather. 12.15 Football Focus. 1.00 Live Athletics: Great Edinburgh Cross Country. 2.30 Live Darts: BDO World Championships. 4.30 Final Score. 5.10 BBC News: Regional News; Weather. 5.30 Celebrity Mastermind.
6.00 Animal Antics. New series. Funny clips from the animal kingdom, presented by Tim Brooke-Taylor.
6.30 Richard Hammond's Secret Service. New series. Hidden-camera show.
7.10 Britain's Brightest. New series. Clare Balding hosts this search to find Britain's most intelligent individual, in which 24 people complete a series of challenges before one is crowned champion.
8.25 The National Lottery: In It to Win It. New series. Dale Winton presents the quiz in which five contestants pit their wits to scoop a big cash prize. Includes the National Lottery draws with Scott Mills.
9.15 Casualty. Four student nurses are thrown in at the deep end on their opening day working in the ED when they are called upon to treat casualties who have been injured in a coach crash.
10.05 Mrs Brown's Boys. Agnes falls under a hypnotist's spell. (R)
10.35 BBC News: Weather; National Lottery Update.
10.55 Film: Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End. (2007) Fantasy adventure sequel, with Johnny Depp.
1.30 Weatherview. 1.35 BBC News.

BBC2

6.50 Film: Sylvia Scarlett. (1935)
8.15 Film: The Little Minister. (1934) **10.00 A History of Britain** by Simon Schama. (R) **11.00 Meet the Ancestors.** (R) **11.30 Map Man.** (R) **12.00 Indian Food Made Easy.** (R) **12.30 Talking Pictures. 1.15 Film: Of Human Bondage.** (1934) **2.35 EastEnders.** (R) **4.00 Great British Food Revival. 4.30 Live Darts: BDO World Championships.**
5.30 The Choir: A Year with the Military Wives. (R)
6.30 Flog It! Mark Stacey and Kate Bliss examine collectibles in St Albans, Hertfordshire, and presenter Paul Martin discovers the origin of the city's name during a visit to the cathedral. (R)
7.30 Dad's Army. Mainwaring guards some PoWs. (R)
8.00 Stanley Baxter: The Many Faces Of. A profile of the Glaswegian entertainer whose TV shows drew huge audiences in the 1970s and 80s. With contributions from Michael Grade, Barry Cryer, Bill Oddie and Gregor Fisher.
9.00 QI XL. Stephen Fry is joined by comedians Phil Jupitus, Rich Hall and Jimmy Carr, along with regular panellist Alan Davies on an extended version of the quiz with a difference. (R)
9.45 Film: Cemetery Junction. (2010) Premiere. A young man in 1970s Reading questions what he wants as he starts a new job and is reunited with an old girlfriend. Comedy drama, with Christian Cooke.
11.15 Darts: BDO World Championships. Action from the opening day at the Lakeside Country Club.
12.05 Darts Extra. 2.05 Close.

ITV1

6.00 CITV: Handy Manny. 6.25 The Hive. (R) **6.35 The Hive.** (R) **6.40 Dino Dan.** (R) **6.55 Dino Dan.** (R) **7.05 Fleabag Monkeyface.** (R) **7.15 Fleabag Monkeyface.** (R) **7.30 Fleabag Monkeyface.** (R) **7.40 Matt Hatter Chronicles.** (R) **8.05 Ultimate Spider-Man.** **8.30 Victorious.** (R) **9.00 Jessie.** **9.25 ITV News. 9.30 The Jeremy Kyle Show USA. 11.25 The Jeremy Kyle Show USA. 11.20 River Monsters.** (R) **11.50 ITV News: Weather. 12.00 Live FA Cup Football. 3.00 Dancing on Ice Live Tour 2012. (R) 4.00 Regional Programme: Weather. 4.15 ITV News: Weather. 4.30 Live FA Cup Football.**
7.15 Splash! New series. Celebrity contest, in which five stars perform a dive in an Olympic-sized pool under the tuition of London 2012 medalist Tom Daley. Vernon Kay and Gabby Logan present.
8.45 Take Me Out. New series. A pilot from Ayrshire, a Liverpool abseiler, a London entrepreneur and a surfer from Bournemouth try to impress 30 single women. Paddy McGuinness presents.
9.45 The Jonathan Ross Show. New series. Jeremy Piven talks about his new drama Mr Selfridge. David Tennant discusses his role in Spies of Warsaw, and comedienne Sarah Millican is also in the studio.
10.45 ITV News: Weather. 11.00 FA Cup Football Highlights. Matt Smith presents action from the third-round matches, which included Barrow v Macclesfield Town v Cardiff City, Southampton v Chelsea and Peterborough United v Norwich City.
12.30 The Store. 2.30 Pushing Daisies. (R) **3.15 ITV Nightscreen.**

CHANNEL 4

6.00 The Treacle People. (R) **6.10 The Hoobs.** (R) **6.35 The Hoobs.** (R) **7.00 International Volleyball. 8.00 The Morning Line. 9.00 Everybody Loves Raymond.** (R) **9.30 Everybody Loves Raymond.** (R) **10.00 Frasier.** (R) **10.30 Frasier.** (R) **11.00 Undercover Boss USA.** (R) **12.00 The Big Bang Theory.** (R) **12.30 The Big Bang Theory.** (R) **12.55 The Simpsons.** (R) **1.30 Channel 4 Racing. 4.00 Come Dine with Me.** (R) **4.35 Come Dine with Me.** (R) **5.40 Come Dine with Me.** (R)
6.10 Channel 4 News.
6.40 4thought tv. Members of the public who have made New Year's resolutions and stuck to them talk about their commitment to changing their lives.
6.45 Is Our Weather Getting Worse? Investigating the UK's most severe weather events of the past decade, with the use of archive footage, expert insight and computer graphics. (R)
7.40 Film: The Day After Tomorrow. (2004) A climatologist races across America to rescue his son as freak weather conditions cause devastation around the world. Disaster thriller, starring Jake Gyllenhaal and Dennis Quaid.
10.00 Film: Inglourious Basterds. (2009) Jewish-American soldiers on a Nazi-killing spree in occupied France aid a resistance plot to assassinate Hitler. Tarantino's wartime adventure, with Brad Pitt and Christoph Waltz.
1.00 Film: Hard Eight. (1996) **2.40 Hollyoaks. 4.45 Smallville.** (R) **5.25 Deal or No Deal.** (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! 10.00 Power Rangers: Super Samurai. 10.35 Batman. The Brave and the Bold. **11.10 Inside Hollywood. 11.15 Celebrity Big Brother.** (R) **12.15 The Gadget Show.** (R) **1.15 Film: Shattered Silence.** (2012) **3.00 Film: The Dam Busters.** (1954) **5.30 Film: Random Hearts.** (1999) Drama, with Harrison Ford.
7.50 5 News Weekend.
7.55 NCIS. Gibbs discovers a link between the murder of a petty officer and the break-up of his team, leading him and new director Leon Vance to unravel the mystery. (R)
8.50 NCIS. A lieutenant apparently commits suicide by jumping from an aircraft carrier and Ziva and McGee are dispatched to inform the widow – but arrive to find that she has been murdered. (R)
9.45 Celebrity Big Brother. Highlights of the famous housemates' past 24 hours under the all-seeing eye of Big Brother, as they try to get used to living alongside one another.
10.45 50 Shocking Facts About Diet and Exercise. Countdown of weight-loss methods, with scientists, industry experts and exponents explaining the pros and cons of fad diets, "healthy" foods and extreme exercise regimens.
11.45 Forensic Files. A female killer leaves police few clues to work with. (R)
12.15 SuperCasino. 4.00 Michaela's Wild Challenge. (R) **4.25 Great Artists.** (R) **4.50 Rough Guide To.** (R) **5.05 Hana's Helpline.** (R) **5.15 The Milkshake! Show.** (R) **5.40 Thomas & Friends.** (R) **5.50 Roary the Racing Car.** (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Three
7.00 Merlin 7.45 Doctor Who 8.35 Top Gear 9.30 Russell Howard's Good News 10.05 Film: The Prestige (2006)
BBC Four
7.00 Lost Land of the Tiger 8.00 A History of Art in Three Colours 9.00 Borgen 11.00 The Richest Songs in the World
ITV2
3.35 Film: The Mighty Ducks (1992) **5.40 Film: Peter Pan** (2003) **7.50 Film: Evan Almighty** (2007) **9.45 Take Me Out – The Gossip** **10.35 Fake Reaction 11.20 Film: Couples Retreat** (2009)
ITV3
3.00 Agatha Christie's Marple 5.00 Lewis 7.00 Doc Martin 9.00 Midsomer Murders 11.05 Film: Elizabeth: The Golden Age (2007)
ITV4
3.15 Film: The Way West (1967) **4.30 Film: The Big Country** (1958) **9.00 Film: Hard Target** (1993) Action thriller, starring Jean-Claude Van Damme. **11.00 Film: GoodFellas** (1990)
E4
2.30 Film: Charlotte's Web (2006) **4.30 How I Met Your Mother 5.30 The Big Bang Theory 7.30 How I Met Your Mother 8.00 Rules of Engagement 9.00 Film: Role Models** (2008) **11.00 The 50 Funniest Moments of 2012**
Film4
3.10 Fantastic Mr Fox (2009) **5.45 Film: The Big Country** (1958) **7.15 Zoolander** (2001) **9.00 Knowing** (2009) An astrophysicist decodes a page of numbers revealing the dates of a series of disasters and tries to prevent them happening. Mystery thriller, starring Nicolas Cage and Rose Byrne. **11.20 The Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning** (2006)

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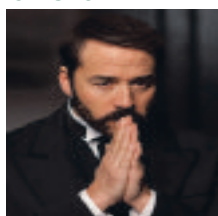


What's On!

SUNDAY'S TV 6.01.13

Listings supplied by Press Association

CHOICE



Jeremy Piven

Mr Selfridge
ITV1, 9pm

Created by multi-award-winning writer Andrew Davies (he penned famous adaptations of Pride and Prejudice, Bleak House and Little Dorrit) and set in 1909, this new, fact-based drama stars Jeremy Piven as Harry Selfridge, a visionary American entrepreneur who, during a trip to London, decided that the British shopping experience needed sprucing up. So he invested £400,000 (a whopping amount of cash back then) in creating the Oxford Street department store that now carries his name. But, as we see here, getting his vision off the ground wasn't always easy.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. 9.00 The Andrew Marr Show. 10.00 The Big Questions. 11.00 Helicopter Heroes. (R) 11.30 Bargain Hunt. (R) 12.30 BBC News: Weather. 12.40 Countryfile. (R) 1.35 Escape to the Country. (R) 2.35 Film: Old Dogs. (2009) 4.00 Britain's Favourite Supermarket Foods. (R) 5.00 Songs of Praise. 5.35 Africa. 6.35 BBC News: Regional News; Weather. 7.00 Countryfile. Adam Henson presents a selection of past stories featuring horses and dogs, animals that are integral to rural life, and invites some of the most charming breeds on to his farm. Including Weather for the Week Ahead. 8.00 Antiques Roadshow. Fiona Bruce and the team travel to Stowe House in Buckinghamshire, where items include a 16th-century print and evidence of one of the earliest Beatles concerts. Red button viewers can play along by guessing the valuations. 9.00 Ripper Street. A teenage orphan is suspected of beating a toy-maker to death, bringing Reid and Drake face to face with a child gang and its brutal master. Joseph Gilgun (Misfits) guest stars. 10.00 BBC News: Regional News; Weather. 10.25 Film: Bruce Almighty. (2003) Comedy, starring Jim Carrey and Morgan Freeman. 12.00 The Sky at Night. 12.20 The Celebrity Apprentice USA. 1.40 Weatherview. 1.45 Sign Zone: Miniature Britain. (R) 2.45 Holby City. (R) 3.45 MasterChef: The Professionals. (R) 4.15 You've Been Scammed. (R) 4.45 BBC News.

BBC2

6.00 Film: They Flew Alone. (1942) 7.40 Film: Yellow Canary. (1943) 9.15 A to Z of TV Gardening. 10.00 Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. 11.30 EastEnders. (R) 12.55 Live Darts. BDO World Championships. 4.45 Coast. (R) 5.30 Flog It! The team visits Darlington, Co Durham. (R) 6.30 Blackpool: Big Night Out. Documentary looking at the Lancashire seaside resort through the eyes of acts who have performed there, and recalling its heyday as a town at the heart of British entertainment. (R) 7.30 Fawcett Towers. Manuel's pet rat escapes just as a health inspector is about to visit, sending Basil on a mad dash to find it before disaster ensues. Last in the series. (R) 8.00 Neil Armstrong - First Man on the Moon. Close family and friends tell the story of the commander of the historic Apollo 11 lunar mission in July 1969 and reveal how he coped with the subsequent fame. (R) 9.00 Tankies: Tank Heroes of WWII. 10.00 Speed Dreams: The Fastest Place on Earth. 11.00 Darts: BDO World Championships. Colin Murray presents action from the second day at the Lakeside Country Club in Frimley Green, featuring first-round matches. 11.50 Darts Extra. The BDO World Championships. Extended highlights of the first-round matches on the second day at the Lakeside Country Club in Frimley Green, played over the best of five sets. 1.50 BBC News.

ITV1

6.00 CITV: Handy Manny. 6.25 The Hive. (R) 6.35 The Hive. (R) 6.40 Dino Dan. (R) 6.55 Dino Dan. (R) 7.05 Fleabag Monkeyface. (R) 7.15 Fleabag Monkeyface. (R) 7.30 Fleabag Monkeyface. (R) 7.40 Matt Hatter Chronicles. (R) 8.05 Rated A for Awesome. 8.15 Rated A for Awesome. 8.30 Big Time Rush. 9.00 The Aquabats Super Show. 9.25 FA Cup Football Highlights. (R) 10.40 Dinner Date. (R) 11.45 May the Best House Win. (R) 12.45 Rosemary & Thyme. (R) 1.45 ITV News: Weather. 1.55 Film: Columbo: Short Fuse. (1972) 3.30 The FA Cup Draw. 3.45 Midsomer Murders. (R) 5.45 Regional Programme: Weather. 6.00 ITV News: Weather. 6.15 Dancing on Ice. New series. Jason Gardiner returns on a new look judging panel as the first group of skaters battles to stay in the competition. Phillip Schofield and Christine Bleakley present. The results are at 8.30pm. 7.45 All Star Family Fortunes. New series. Soap stars Mikee North and Matthew Wolfenden take part. 8.30 Dancing on Ice: The Skate Off. New series. The two least popular celebrities have to skate again. 9.00 Mr Selfridge. New series. US retail magnate Harry Gordon Selfridge arrives in London in 1908 planning to open the world's finest department store. 10.30 ITV News: Weather. 10.45 FA Cup Football Highlights. Swansea City v Arsenal and Mansfield Town v Liverpool. 11.45 Royal Babies. (R) 12.40 The Store. 2.40 Pushing Daisies. (R) 3.25 ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.20 The Treacle People. (R) 6.30 Film: Arctic Tale. (2007) 7.55 Will & Grace. (R) 8.25 Frasier. (R) 8.55 Frasier. (R) 9.30 Sunday Brunch. 10.00 The Big Bang Theory. (R) 12.30 The Big Bang Theory. (R) 1.00 The Big Bang Theory. (R) 1.30 The Simpsons. (R) 2.00 The Simpsons. (R) 2.30 Film: Clueless. (1995) 4.25 Deal or No Deal. 5.25 Time Team. 6.25 Channel 4 News. 6.55 4thought.tv. Members of the public who have made New Year's resolutions and stuck to them talk about their commitment to changing their lives. 7.00 Come Dine with Me. Dinner party challenge from Wrexham. Taking part are financial adviser Joey Perez, keep-fit enthusiast Jack De Sande, sci-fi fan Tom Evans and hotel inspector Lisa Groom. 8.00 The Hotel. Manager Mark tries to appeal to upmarket guests and seeks the help of a former AA chief hotel inspector - who books in undercover and is unimpressed by what he finds. 9.00 Film: The Iron Lady. (2011) Premiere. The elderly Margaret Thatcher looks back on her controversial political career as she faces up to the death of her husband. Biopic, with Meryl Streep and Jim Broadbent. 11.05 Film: The Wedding Date. (2005) Romantic comedy, with Debra Messing and Jack Davenport. 12.40 Film: Venus. (2006) 2.15 Jennifer Saunders: Laughing at the 90s. (R) 4.05 Smallville. (R) 4.45 Deal or No Deal. (R) 5.40 Baking Mad with Eric Lanlard. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! Peppa Pig. 6.05 Roary the Racing Car. (R) 6.15 Fifi and the Flowertots. (R) 6.25 Bert and Ernie's Great Adventures. (R) 6.30 The Mr Men Show. (R) 6.40 Olive the Ostrich. (R) 6.50 Abby's Flying Fairy School. (R) 7.00 Roobarb and Custard Too. (R) 7.10 Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) 7.25 Animal Antics. (R) 7.35 Make Way for Noddy. (R) 7.45 City of Friends. (R) 8.00 Little Princess. (R) 8.05 The Adventures of Bottle Top Bill and His Best Friend Corky. (R) 8.20 Mio Mao. (R) 8.25 Angelina Ballerina. (R) 8.45 Rupert Bear. (R) 9.00 Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) 9.15 Toby's Travelling Circus. (R) 9.30 Roary the Racing Car. (R) 9.45 Jelly Jam. 10.00 Power Rangers: Super Samurai. 10.35 Batman: The Brave and the Bold. 11.00 Inside Hollywood. (R) 11.05 Celebrity Big Brother. (R) 12.05 Once Upon a Time. (R) 1.00 Film: Are We There Yet? (2005) 2.50 Film: White Fang. (1991) 4.50 Film: Stand By Me. (1986) 6.20 News Weekend. 6.25 Film: X2. (2003) Superhero adventure sequel, starring Hugh Jackman, Patrick Stewart, Ian McKellen, Alan Cumming and Halle Berry. 9.00 Celebrity Big Brother. The ups and downs of life in the BB house as friendships and alliances are made, battle lines are drawn and arguments erupt. 10.00 Most Shocking Celebrity Moments 2012. Countdown of the year's biggest showbiz stories. (R) 12.50 SuperCasino. 4.00 House Doctor. (R) 4.50 Rough Guide To. (R) 5.00 Hana's Helpline. (R) 5.15 The Milkshake! Show. (R) 5.35 Thomas & Friends. (R) 5.50 Roary the Racing Car. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Three 7.00 Great Movie Mistakes IV 9.00 Film: Alice in Wonderland (2010) 10.40 Family Guy
BBC Four 7.00 Britain on Film: A Woman's Place 7.30 Britain on Film: Brits at Play 8.00 Timeshift: How to Write a Mills & Boon 9.00 Doris Day: Virgin Territory 10.00 Film: I Am Love (2009) 11.55 Top of the Pops: The Story of 1978
ITV2 3.35 Take Me Out - The Gossip 4.20 Film: King Kong (2005) 8.00 You've Been Framed! 8.00 The Magical Weekender 10.00 Film: I Now Pronounce You Chuck & Larry (2007)
ITV3 3.55 Film: Watership Down (1978) 5.50 Murder, She Wrote 6.50 Agatha Christie's Poirot 9.00 Film: Rain Man (1988) Drama, starring Dustin Hoffman and Tom Cruise. 11.45 Cracker
ITV4 3.45 Film: The Sea Shall Not Have Them (1955) 5.45 Film: The Last Sunset (1961) 8.00 Premiership Rugby Union 9.00 Film: The Gauntlet (1977) 11.15 Film: Village of the Damned (1995)
E4 3.10 Made in Chelsea End of Season Party 4.15 Film: Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (2009) 6.00 Rules of Engagement 7.00 The Big Bang Theory 8.00 Film: Cheaper by the Dozen 2 (2005) 10.00 The 50 Funniest Moments of 2012
Film4 2.50 The Golden Child (1986) 4.45 The Golden Compass (2007) 6.55 Brewster's Millions (1985) 9.00 Predators (2010) Sci-fi thriller sequel, with Adrien Brody. 11.10 Thank You for Smoking (2005)

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What's On!

Film Choices

MONDAY

The Perfect Teacher, Channel 5, 3.10pm

A spoiled, selfish teenager becomes infatuated with her teacher. She befriends his daughter as a way of worming her way into the family and sets about manipulating every aspect of his life, including driving away his girlfriend. As her mind games continue, her obsession leads her to murder. Thriller, starring Megan Park and David Charvet. (2010)

TUESDAY

Mickey Blue Eyes, ITV1, 10.35pm

A strait-laced Englishman falls for a New York mobster's daughter, who wants to escape her family's criminal connections. However, try as he may, he realises there is virtually no way to avoid being drawn into the family's illegal shenanigans. Romantic comedy, starring Hugh Grant, Jeanne Tripplehorn, James Caan and Burt Young. (1999)

The Rebound, BBC1, 11.25pm

A New York mother starts a new life in suburbia after leaving her unfaithful husband. She befriends a younger man who is still getting over being abandoned by his wife. Romance soon blossoms, but neither is sure if they are just trying to recover from their recent failed relationships. Romantic comedy, with Catherine Zeta-Jones and Justin Bartha. (2009)



The Village, Friday, BBC1, 11.25pm

WEDNESDAY

When a Stranger Calls, Channel 5, 11.30pm

A teenager babysitting for a family living in a remote lakeside house is terrorised by mysterious threatening phone calls. She soon discovers the caller is ringing from inside the house and realises her and the children's lives are in danger. Horror, with Camilla Belle, Katie Cassidy and Tessa Thompson. (2006)

THURSDAY

Vivacious Lady, BBC2, 8.50am

A professor falls in love with a brash nightclub singer while on a trip to New York, and impulsively marries her. However, he is afraid his conservative family will not approve of his new wife, so tries to keep the relationship a secret from them. Romantic comedy, with Ginger Rogers and James Stewart. (1938)

FRIDAY

The Village, BBC1, 11.25pm

The peaceful rustic existence of villagers living a seemingly idyllic life in a remote 19th-century settlement comes under threat when an age-old truce with the creatures of the forest is broken by a headstrong young man. M Night Shyamalan's horror thriller, starring Joaquin Phoenix and Bryce Dallas Howard. (2004)

Pick of the Week

Dynamic duo's series is out of this world

If you've ever wondered how the galaxy began, then allow us to enlighten you.

Our whole universe was in a hot dense state, then nearly 14 billion years ago expansion started. Wait...

Okay, we admit it. Those are the lyrics to The Big Bang Theory, but if you want to know more about life, the universe and everything, then Dara O Briain and Brian Cox have just the show for you.

Since 2011, their week-long strand Stargazing Live has become an annual fixture in January, a time when the other terrestrial channels seem obsessed with shows about diets and alleged celebrities co-habiting in a camera-strawed pre-fab.

Their kick things off their exploration of the night skies with the search for evidence of life on Mars, and ask viewers for help to explore an uncharted area of the red planet's surface.

Plus, Liz Bonnin reports live from NASA mission control to find out the latest findings of the Curiosity Rover, and Mark Thompson offers tips on how to observe the moons of Jupiter.

The Mock the Week veteran and the much imitated professor might be an unlikely double act, but their mix of jargon and banter has proved to be a great way to enjoy a week of programming.

For decades of course The Sky At Night was the daddy of all astronomy shows, a BBC1 staple which was usually screened when most of us were tucked up in bed.

Hosted by the much-missed Patrick Moore, TSAN made history as the longest-running TV show hosted by the same presenter.

From 1957, the acclaimed Knight inspired millions, including Queen guitarist Brian May, and Messrs O Briain and Cox.

Alas, astronomy series on other channels is rarely even an issue these days.

Those with a long memory may recall Heavens Above, a short-lived kids' TV show from the 1980s in which Dr Heather Couper proved that reaching for the stars (while most of us were in the gutter) was just as much fun as playing asteroids on their Atari game system.

After the plug was pulled on that show, commercial TV bosses backed away from the genre about as fast as Felix Baumgartner's sub-space freefall last year.

So thank heavens Brian made the universe sexy again with his assorted BBC shows, Wonders of the Universe and Wonders of the Solar System.

We have no idea what his pending series Wonders of Life will be like, but we imagine his take on natural history could give genre legend David Attenborough a run for his money.

Brian's star, if you'll excuse the pun, has been on the rise for years now, and it helps that he's such a good all rounder, whether fronting impressive strands such as this, or Radio 4's Infinite Monkey Cage, with Robin Ince.

It's little wonder Danny Boyle chose him as technical adviser for his sci-fi epic Sunshine a few years ago.

Coming back to Earth with a bump, here Brian and Dara shed more light on the universe, and if that's not enough, astronomical entertainment for you, stay tuned for spin-off show Back to Earth, which is broadcast immediately afterwards.



Brian Cox and Dara O Briain host Stargazing Live, Tuesday, BBC2, 8pm

Best of the Rest

MONDAY

Miranda

BBC1, 9pm

The image Miranda projects is that of an overgrown child – but the latest episode sees her trying to prove she can behave as an adult. It's a task that is easier said than done... Miranda thinks that everyone will be convinced of her new, grown-up approach to life if she can successfully take care of a toddler and host a dinner party for eight people. Unfortunately, the youngster inside her can't resist a soft play area, so instead of encouraging the toddler to climb on the obstacles, she ends up stuck inside a kids' tunnel. And as for the dinner party... well, you can probably imagine the chaos that ensues there...

TUESDAY

The Undateables

Channel 4, 9pm

Being a small fish in the huge pool that is the dating game can be stressful enough at the best of times (men are from Mars and all that), but the individuals featured in this series have to contend with extra pressures – they're disabled. When the show first aired last year, many of us dared only look through squinted eyes at a programme that sounded as though it would poke fun at those less fortunate. What we were faced with, though, was a heartwarming series that highlighted that, everybody has the right to love and be loved. In this instalment, we meet 26-year-old Michael, whose autism means he struggles to hold down a conversation, let alone

a date.

Death in Paradise

BBC1, 9pm

We're rather pleased to see this crime drama is back for a new run – not least because its depictions of hot weather should warm up our wintry nights. Ben Miller returns as policeman Richard Poole who, along with his team, must discover who has lethally wedged a machete into the back of former sugar plantation owner Roger Seymour. There is no shortage in suspects – Seymour doesn't seem to have been that popular a guy – but picking the right one proves almost impossible, especially when the island's festival of love begins to distract Richard... Sara Martins also stars, alongside guests James Cosmo, Tom Ward and Stephanie Beacham.

WEDNESDAY

Africa

BBC1, 9pm

You've got to hand it to the BBC – their natural history unit is absolutely second to none. That's thanks largely to David Attenborough's influence, both as presenter and former director of programmes. Now, even at the age of 86, he's still the best in his field, and he proves it with this magnificent series. In this second episode, he and the rest of the Africa team visit the rocky outcrops of the Serengeti, in Tanzania, to bring us some remarkable and striking

images. They include a daring lizard risking its life to eat the flies from a lion's face, and footage of one of the most unusual birds extant – the four-foot-tall shoebill – demonstrating its nesting habits.

THURSDAY

Silent Witness

BBC1, 9pm

Another year, another series of Silent Witness. Stepping into Tom Ward's shoes is David Caves as Jack Hodgson, one of the youngest people in the UK in his field. He faces a baptism of fire in his first case alongside Nikki and Leo which involves the death of wealthy, ageing confectionery company owner John Briggs. DI Gold thinks he died of natural causes, but Nikki and Jack aren't so sure. In-fighting among Briggs' family, staff and potential business investors makes finding out whodunit all the more difficult – until the appearance of a new corpse helps to shed some light on the murky matter. Series regulars Emilia Fox and William Gaminara also star, alongside guests Sharon Small, Tim Pigott-Smith and Louis Emerick.

FRIDAY

16 Kids and Counting

Channel 4, 9pm

Sue Radford is the matriarch of Britain's biggest family living under one roof, and having 15 of them already, she is now awaiting number 16. Eldest daughter Sophie, 18, could help out, but her first baby is due a month earlier. Given their ever-increasing numbers, a road trip to France could be seen as less of a family outing and more of an invasion, but that's on the cards as Sophie and boyfriend Joe come to terms with becoming first-time parents, while Sue and Noel get used to the idea of their new status as grandparents. Here cameras offer us a glimpse of the laughter, tears and general chaos at the Radfords'.

The Graham Norton Show

BBC1, 10.35pm

Graham Norton is like a pair of old slippers. That's not to say he's got a faint whiff of something rather unpleasant and is well-worn; more that he's a comfortable fit and you just wouldn't be without him. Graham's audience knows exactly what it's going to get with him – clean, excitable fun that won't have telly bosses falling over themselves to reach for the 'censor' button. The fella simply has it. Whatever 'it' may be, there aren't many talk-show hosts like him. The man's got the gift of the gab, we'll give him that. And tonight, he's rubbing shoulders with the big guns, inviting only the coolest director in the world, Quentin Tarantino, on the show for a chinwag.

The Undateables, Tuesday, Channel 4, 9pm

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£650 PCM



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A Three Bedroom Semi-Detached House Comprising Of: Large Lounge With Dining Area, Fitted Kitchen Within Spacious Conservatory, Downstairs WC, One Double Bedroom and Two Large Single Bedrooms With The Added Bonus Of A Study/Bedroom Four. Garage and Driveway for 2/3 Cars With Gates To The Rear. Gas Central Heating And Double Glazing Throughout.

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£625 PCM



MERRY HILL, MADISON AVENUE

A Lovely And Spacious Unfurnished Modern Townhouse, Within Yards Of Merry Hill Shopping Centre, Comprising Of: Gas Central Heating, Fitted Kitchen, Downstairs WC, Dining Room/Study, Lounge, House Bathroom, Three Bedrooms, Master Bedroom With En-Suite Shower Room, Allocated Parking Space. Available Immediately.

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HAGLEY, MILL POOL CLOSE

Located in a peaceful location with lovely views is this unfurnished luxury ground floor apartment, briefly comprising of: Gas Central Heating, Through Lounge/Dining Room with Views Across Open Countryside, Fitted Kitchen, Two Double Bedrooms, Bathroom with Shower & Separate WC, Communal Gardens, Parking Space and Garage. Available End Of January

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HALESOWEN, WASSELL ROAD

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£595 PCM



CRADLEY HEATH, BARRS ROAD

An End Terrace Unfurnished Property, Recently Part Refurbished To A High Standard And Situated In A Popular Residential Area, Comprising Of: Three Bedrooms, Fitted Kitchen, Two Reception Rooms, Double Glazing, Gas Central Heating, Off Road Parking With Rear Garden, With The Advantage Of The Water Rates Pre Paid Until March 2013!

£595 PCM



CRADLEY HEATH, VALLEY ROAD

A very nice and welcoming home, this 3 bed house features a spacious lounge with separate dining room, modern kitchen with a freezer, downstairs wc, house bathroom and shower, driveway and well kept gardens to front and rear.

£595 PCM



ROWLEY REGIS, UPLANDS AVENUE

A Part Furnished To Suit Traditional Semi Detached House. Close To Local Shops, Train Station And M62. Briefly Comprising: Three Bedrooms, Through Lounge/Dining Room With Separate Entrance, Fitted Kitchen With Appliances, House Bathroom With Shower, Benefits Include Gas Central Heating, Double Glazing, Garage And Driveway Parking, Rear Gardens.

£550 PCM



HALESOWEN, CHERRY STREET

An unfurnished mid terraced home in a sought after location, briefly comprising of: Living Room, Dining Kitchen, Two Bedrooms, House Bathroom with Shower, Rear Garden, Gas Central Heating, Double Glazing And Rear Parking.

£550 PCM



STOURBRIDGE, HUNGRY HILL

Situated in a popular residential area of Stourbridge, within a few minutes walk of Stourbridge Junction Train Station, the property features a large bedroom to the front and 2 single bedrooms, spacious lounge to the front, large kitchen, house bathroom with shower, rear garden and driveway to the front. Available immediately

£525 PCM



HALESOWEN, TENTERFIELDS

An exceptional opportunity to rent this room in a shared house, with no bills to pay at all, cleaning done for you, towels and tea and coffee supplied for each room. Also the use of free WiFi, use of the lounge, kitchen, office room. All rooms have their own en-suite facilities. Well worth a viewing, and ideal for a single person.

£500 PCM



HALESOWEN, HAWNE COURT

A ground floor unfurnished flat briefly comprising of: Living Room, Fitted Kitchen with appliances and Breakfast Area, Two Bedrooms, Bathroom with Shower, Double Glazing, Gas Central Heating, Allocated Parking and Garage.

£495 PCM



STOURBRIDGE, CHAPEL STREET

A Three Bedroom Link Detached House Within Walking Distance To Lye Shops, Buses And Train Station, Comprising Of: Lounge, Kitchen, Three Bedrooms And Bathroom, Electric Heating, Double Glazing, Rear Garden With Patio, Blocked Paved Driveway For Two Cars. Available Immediately.

£495 PCM



HALESOWEN, HARDEN COURT

Situated In Popular Residential Area Of Halesowen, With Easy Access To Buses To The Town, Is This Part Furnished First Floor Apartment Comprising Of: Two Bedrooms, Lounge, Fitted Kitchen, Bathroom With A Shower, Gas Central Heating, Double Glazing, Garage Parking, Communal Gardens

£495 PCM



BRIERLEY HILL, FOXDALE DRIVE

Been Freshly Decorated And Within A 5 Minutes Drive Of Brierley Hill Town Centre And Few Minutes From Merry Hill Shopping Centre, Is This Unfurnished End Terrace House, Comprising Of: Two Bedrooms, 1 With Fitted Wardrobes, House Bathroom With Shower, Nice Sized Lounge, Fitted Kitchen, On Road Parking, No Garden

£475 PCM



HALESOWEN, MANOR LANE

A furnished flat above shop, briefly comprising of: Gas Central Heating, Living Room, Large Fitted Kitchen, Double Bedroom, Shower Room, Secure Parking

£440 PCM

HOMES

Precautions can help to minimise flood damage

WITH the Midlands hit by flooding, and heavy rain still a threat across much of the UK, Lloyds TSB Insurance is offering advice for homeowners to minimise damage to property and homes.

Tim Downes, Regional Manager, Personal Claims Consultants, said: We are advising homeowners who are at risk to take steps now to reduce the risk of damage to their homes, and to monitor local news and weather updates."

According to Lloyds TSB claims data, flood damage causes an average of £17,000 worth of damage per incident, so taking steps now is essential to avoid issues later.

If your home is at risk of flooding

- Place sandbags outside doors, air-bricks, windows and any other holes to reduce the amount of water entering your property

- Turn off the mains supplies of water, gas and electricity
- Unplug all electrical items, and store them as high as possible
- Disconnect pipes to washing machine and dishwashers to avoid damage if appliances move during the flood

- Move as much furniture as possible upstairs, weigh down large items that can't be lifted with sandbags so they don't move and cause damage

- Empty contents of cupboards and drawers, and store as high as possible
- Move rugs and curtains upstairs or to higher ground

- Keep your home insurer's policy details and telephone numbers to hand in case you need to make a claim

- Remember to move sentimental items such as photograph albums to a safe place, as they cannot be replaced.
- Ensure mains supplies of water,



Bewdley and Stourport have been hit by flooding from the River Severn



electricity and gas have been checked for damage by a qualified engineer before reconnecting

- Dry out appliances that have been affected by water and ensure a qualified electrician or Gas Safe registered engineer inspects them before use

- Open doors and windows to ventilate and dry out the property. Ensure the home has completely dried before attempting redecorating work

- Contact your insurer and report any damage caused to buildings and/or contents as soon as possible
- Take photographs of damaged

items as it may help your insurer to settle a claim

- Keep any ruined property as insurers may want to inspect it.

- Keep a home emergency kit prepared in case of a winter emergency such as a flood or severe storm.

- Listen to the radio for regular updates on the weather or other emergency situations.

Householders who are concerned their homes may be at risk of flooding can register for Environment Agency Floodline Warnings Direct by calling 0845 988 1188.

Simple questions to warm things up

TENANTS looking to avoid feeling the chill in a newly rented property this winter can find a warmer place to live with a few simple questions, according to the Association of Residential Letting Agents (ARLA).

Ian Potter, Managing Director, ARLA said, "Utility bills are a key consideration for most tenants, especially during the colder winter months.

There are many well-insulated private rental sector properties available, but there are others which may require tenants to use their own common sense to reduce bills."

ARLA has the following tips to help tenants identify key features:

1. Ask about insulation:

When viewing a property, be sure to find out what kind of insulation is installed and how recently it was put in. While factors like loft insulation may not be immediately visible, they can make a huge difference to a property's heat retention.

A lack of snow or frost on a property's roof during a cold snap can be a good indicator that a lot of heat is being lost through poor insulation.

2. Look at a copy of the EPC:

An energy performance certificate (EPC) should be available for prospective tenants' consideration as part of the viewing process. This can give a good indication of how energy efficient a property is. The closer to 'A', the more likely it is to hold in heat and register lower utility bills.

3. Don't forget the boiler:

A new boiler can make a significant difference to heating bills; therefore it is always worth asking when the model was installed.

This can also be a factor if there are multiple showers in the property, which can be a drain on hot water levels. All boilers should be regularly serviced by a certified gas fitter, and be sure to check the legally required documentation before signing any tenancy agreement. If the boiler has



Every new tenant should ask questions about the heating and insulation

not been checked recently, ask the landlord to agree to a check-up before you move in.

4. Paying the bills:

While many landlords will state that electricity and gas suppliers should not be changed in the tenancy agreement, it is always a good idea to check. If they do allow you to change supplier, it is always possible that you could find a cheaper deal, meaning there is less pressure to use the heating sparingly.

5. Double glazing and curtains:

Many properties lose heat through windows, so always check the glazing in each room. Single glazing or larger windows can often make rooms colder, and this should be a key consideration for winter months.

Curtains can be one solution to this problem.

For added warmth, be sure to ask the landlord or letting agent if they are happy for you to put up curtains if they are not already fitted.



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MOTURING NEWS AND REVIEWS

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Your essential guide to the world of motoring compiled by Motoring Editor Sharon Walters

Versatility and extra space puts the Splash out in front

By John Griffiths

WHO knows where car manufacturers come up with the names of their new models, but you can't help thinking Suzuki wanted British motorists to Splash out on one of their newly-updated models.

It's officially a mini-MPV, but it's a still a bit bigger than some of the other popular hatchbacks in the small car experts' line-up, and those of its rivals.

It goes to show that a few extra inches can make a big difference.

The revamped Splash doesn't take up any more room on the road, neither is it any more difficult to park, than most in the hatchback class. But it's taller, which means an elevated driving position for better visibility, better than average room for five passengers and a bit more

luggage space. The latest Splash has new front and rear bumper styling, a new bonnet and grille design, and inside there's a new design of seat fabric and graphite colour scheme.

I drove the top-of-the-range SZ4 version powered by the lively 1.2 litre, 94PS petrol engine originally developed for the Splash's popular stablemate, the Swift. The list price is £12,000 while the entry level model is £9,325 – although at the time of writing Suzuki's 'VAT free' offer was putting them all in the bargain basement.

The Splash's big selling points are versatility and room compared to hatchback rivals, particularly when it comes to the most frequently used seats – the two in the front. The seating position is relatively high, with deep windows, which helps visibility and manoeuvring in tight spots.

It also occurred to me that it would be appreciated by a couple of elderly relatives, who find getting in and out of my own small hatchback a bit of a trial.

The three rear seats split and fold



The Suzuki Splash, a spacious mini-MPV

flat to create an impressive 573 litres of cargo space, plus a water-proof compartment under the load floor: ideal for a dog and your wellies

without messing up the interior.

I didn't get to drive the one litre, 68PS engine but the 1.2 (familiar from the Swift) is smooth and lively, taking you from a standstill to 60mph in 12 seconds yet capable of averaging a little over 55mpg. CO2 emissions are 118g/km, so at current rates that will cost you just £30 a year in VED (road tax).

There isn't a diesel option but to be frank with such economy figures and the extra 5p per litre or so you'd pay for fuel, that's hardly worth worrying about.

The Splash is light and easy to drive, and its height has an added advantage. It allowed the engineers a little more room for suspension components compared to smaller cars, resulting in a particularly smooth ride by class standards.

All Splash come with four airbags, CD tuner with MP3 player and steering wheel-mounted audio controls; a leather-trimmed steering wheel; remote central locking; front electric windows with driver's auto-down; electrically adjustable and heated door mirrors;

height-adjustable front seats; tilt adjustable steering wheel and an information display.

The SZ3 and 4 versions also get air conditioning, while top of the range models have an Electronic Stability Programme; curtain shield airbags, 15in alloys, front foglamps, keyless entry and start with privacy glass for the rear side windows and tailgate.

BUMPER TO BUMPER

Model: Suzuki Splash SZ4 1.2
Engine: 1.2 litre dual VVT (variable valve timing) petrol engine driving the front wheels through a five-speed manual gearbox.
Performance: 0-60mph in 12 secs.
Economy: Urban 46.3mpg, country 62.8mpg, average 55.4mpg. CO2 emissions 118g/km.
Insurance group: (1-50) 11.
Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.



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Bond fever shakes up the price of Aston DB5



Best of British – the 1964 Aston Martin DB5 which made top price at the sale

THE usual huge crowd flocked to Brightwells to see over 100 classic cars and motorcycles come under the hammer.

Undeterred by difficult travelling conditions and widespread flooding in the run-up to the sale, bidding was keen for many lots and by the end of the day over 70 vehicles had found new homes in a sale which grossed almost £900,000.

Given all the hype surrounding the 50th anniversary of the James Bond films and the recent 'Skyfall' premiere, it was perhaps no surprise that a silver Aston Martin DB5 topped the results table.

A 1964 model that had been partially stripped out and race prepared by the

late Peter Wheeler of TVR fame, the Aston soared way beyond its estimate before going to an American bidder for £184,800.

Also hotly contested was a beautifully presented 1937 Alvis Speed 25 SB Charlesworth Saloon that was finally secured by a German collector for £71,600 (some £15,000 above forecast). However, perhaps the most surprising result of all was the price paid for a rather crudely made 1932 Riley Nine Special that had been languishing in a Cheshire barn for 30 years. With half-a-dozen phone bidders chasing it, the Riley eventually trebled its estimate before being hammered down to another German bidder for £17,000.

More predictable was the £25,750 paid by a UK buyer for a left-hand drive 1970 Porsche 911T 2.2 which confirms just how desirable these early

911s have become recently, even in basic T spec as here.

Triumph's TR range of sportscars always have a following and the £13,400 raised by a 1967 TR4A and the £10,500 for a 1972 TR6 were bang on the money for good usable examples. Land Rovers also have many fans and a superbly restored 1966 Series 2A fetched a richly deserved £10,300.

"Overall we were delighted with the results of the sale," said Brightwells' car consultant, James Dennison. "Foreign bidders were much in evidence and good cars are continuing to attract very healthy prices despite the sometimes gloomy news in other areas of the economy. The outlook for next year looks positive and we expect the market for classic cars will remain buoyant."

The next sale is on March 6, 2013

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A timely reminder that spirit still intact

Albion 2 Norwich 1
ALBION calmed their pre-Christmas nerves with a victory which ended a run of three Premier League defeats.

Frank words were exchanged on the pitch and in the dressing room during and after a win that was secured when Romelu Lukaku's brilliant 82nd-minute header completed a battling turnaround, **writes Steve Madeley.**

Yet while boss Steve Clarke and his players accepted their performance in ending Norwich's fine unbeaten run had been less than sparkling, they also knew that victory was all-important to silence suggestions that their early-season bubble had burst.

And after the Baggies had found themselves 1-0 down to Robert Snodgrass's fine free-kick and staring at a fifth successive winless match, the comeback that began with Zoltan Gera's scrambled equaliser and ended with Lukaku's winner was a timely reminder that their fighting spirit remains intact.

Honest

After four matches without a win and more than five hours without a goal, Clarke's players knew the result of this match was infinitely more significant than the performance.

In an honest post-match debrief, the Scot praised his players' commitment and effort but challenged them to rediscover their poise and fluidity.

There are, however, several reasons for Clarke to be cheerful, most notably the continued fine form of centre-backs Jonas Olsson and Gareth McAuley and the impressive emergence of Goran Popov at left-back.

And the return of established No. 1 Ben Foster was a welcome sight despite an error that contributed to Snodgrass's opener.

Albion and Norwich traded half-chances before Peter Odemwingie fouled Snodgrass, who bent the resulting free-kick into the net off Foster's hand.

Albion got the break they needed two minutes before the break when keeper Mark Bunn could only palm an Olsson header against the woodwork and Gera bundled home the rebound for the equaliser.

And on 82 minutes, Lukaku thundered home a magnificent header from a fine Popov cross.

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Take heart for annual run

BLACK COUNTRY keep-fit fans are preparing to run for their hearts.

Action Heart's annual five-mile run takes place this year on Sunday, February 24.

The 23rd Heart Run gets under way at 9.30am, starting and finishing at Russells Hall Hospital in Dudley.

The event, supported by Dudley NHS Primary Care Trusts, is enjoyed by all types of people, from serious club runners to joggers and fun-runners.

Many might not tackle the event but for the training schedule provided by the organisers, which will appear in the Chronicle.

An application form is printed, left,



or can be downloaded from www.actionheartrunning.com

Send a cheque, payable to Action Heart, with entry form and SAE for race number to: Action Heart, 5 Baird House, Dudley Innovation Centre, Pensnett Estate, Kingswinford, DY6 7YA.

Fee: £11 (registered running club

members); £13 (non-club members). There is no entry on the day.

If you have not exercised for some time or are out of condition, see your doctor and get approval.

Training: Week One

Monday: 10 minutes (alternate one min jog/one min walk).

Tuesday: Rest.

Wednesday: Five minutes (two min jog/one min walk/two min jog).

Thursday: Rest.

Friday: Seven minutes (three min jog/one min walk/three min jog).

Saturday: Rest.

Sunday: 10 minutes (jog/walk).

Look out for week two next week.

Own goal is a devil of a blow for Baggies

Manchester Utd 2 Albion 0

A YEAR of magical moments almost ended well for Albion at the 'Theatre of Dreams'.

Their travelling fans gloried in the second-half efforts of a patched-up Baggies team as Steve Clarke's battlers handed the Premier League leaders a real scare as 2012 drew to a close, **writes Steve Madeley.**

Ultimately, a moment of misfortune for Gareth McAuley, with an own goal, and a flash of Robin van Persie brilliance ensured Manchester United kept their title charge on track with what would have looked, to those not present, like a routine victory.

The subdued, nervous, 72,000 United fans, who barely made a squeak as their side edged home, knew their latest success had not come easily.

Albion's performance before half-time was a touch anti-climactic in the wake of back-to-back victories that had restored the soaring optimism generated by their early-season surge.

Meekness

But, as the footballing curtain came down on the year of a lifetime for Baggies supporters, it was hardly a day for dwelling on the frustrating meekness of the first-half performance. It was a day for celebrating a fine second-half effort from an Albion side shorn of as many as seven potential starters.

It was a day for exalting in a potential breakthrough display by 19-year-old George Thorne and a very solid turn by understudy centre-back Gabriel Tamas.

Most of all, it was an occasion for Albion fans to reflect on a marvellous 12 months past and look ahead to a year in which – given the continuing struggles of their neighbours – they can realistically hope to see their club cement a place as West Midlands football's leading lights.

Despite a final scoreline that gave the impression of a workaday victory for United, there was still evidence of the huge



Dejection for Albion's Gareth McAuley after scoring an own goal

strides made by Albion since 2012 began with a routine defeat at Tottenham.

Despite a raft of changes that tested the Hawthorns squad to its limits for the middle fixture of a crowded festive programme, the Baggies underlined the increasing depth at the club by pushing United all the way until substitute Van Persie's wonderful goal killed off all hope in the dying seconds of the game.

Sir Alex Ferguson's nervous prowling on the touchline for much of the first half was a clear sign that the Baggies had their hosts worried.

At the heart of a spirited effort was Thorne, a talented teenager who finally announced his arrival on the first-team scene and will hope to capitalise on a solid Premier League foothold.

Thorne had made his Premier League debut in the first game of 2012 and strug-

gled to punch his weight at White Hart Lane.

His influential display against the Red Devils hinted that he had matured significantly in the past 12 months, giving fans one more reason to be optimistic for 2013.

That optimism was on show in the opening 10 minutes at Old Trafford as they started brightly and might have had a penalty when Shane Long went down under Chris Smalling's clumsy challenge.

But the positive start was undone when Graham Dorrans and Billy Jones failed to intercept a clever flick by Shinji Kagawa and Ashley Young's cross from the left was turned into his own net at the near post by McAuley.

United used their stroke of luck as a springboard but were denied by their former keeper, Ben Foster, brilliantly when he pushed a fierce shot from Ashley Young on



Gabriel Tamas, right, tangles with Danny Welbeck

to the crossbar. Tamas blocked crucially on the line from Michael Carrick and Foster's mis-hit clearance ricocheted just wide off Danny Welbeck.

But, after the interval, it was the Baggies who were the more likely scorers by the time Chris Brunt's corner hit McAuley's shoulder and thudded off the bar midway through the second half, although the Northern Irishman was penalised for a shove. The Baggies then laid siege to the United goal in a late assault, but in the final minute Van Persie struck United's second, cutting in from the right and bending a wicked left-footed shot into the top corner past a helpless Foster.

The Dutchman's emphatic strike extinguished any hopes Albion had of some reward but it could not deter the noisy Baggies fans, whose 'Pride of the Midlands' chants continued without interruption.

Albion can get more ambitious for 2013

QPR 1 Albion 2
IT'S mission all-but accomplished, with half the season left, **writes Steve Madeley.**

The 40-point mantra that governed ambition for the first half of Steve Clarke's debut campaign served well in the opening 19 games but the Baggies can aim higher.

After ending their winter wobble with a tense win against Norwich days earlier, Clarke's men followed it up with a first double of the season in an all-action Boxing Day contest at Loftus Road.

They withstood a late barrage as new QPR boss Harry Redknapp could feel aggrieved at the result.

Albion kitman Pat Frost filled out the teamsheet under instructions from a coach stranded on the M40.

Shaun Wright-Phillips skipped between two defenders and crossed as Jamie Mackie stole a yard on Goran Popov. The Rangers wideman headed wide.

Albion held their own in general play and went ahead on 29 minutes with Chris Brunt collecting Marc Antoine Fortune's square pass and letting fly from 30 yards with a daisy-cutter to beat the diving Rob Green.

Threatened

Popov limped off with a hamstring pull and Gareth McAuley had to make a hurried, headed clearance – but, as half-time approached, Albion grew in confidence and were only threatened as Clint Hill headed off target.

On the stroke of half-time a jinking run by James Morrison helped him set up Zoltan Gera, who bent a shot just wide.

On 50 minutes Brunt's umpteenth dangerous corner saw Jamie Mackie head into the air and, as Green was challenged by Fortune, the QPR keeper fell over the line.

Furious home players screamed for a free-kick for Fortune's challenge but ref Chris Foy awarded the goal.

Lukaku had a chance after being played in by Mulumbu but Green partly redeemed himself by saving at the feet of the striker.

With 22 minutes left Djibril Cisse nipped between Albion's centre-backs to collect Stephane Mbia's neat through-ball and score.

Hill's goalbound header was blocked on the line by Mulumbu before Liam Ridgwell escaped what looked a blatant penalty as he blocked with his arm.

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Ladies to face big test with cup tie

NEWLY-FORMED Halesowen Town Ladies face their biggest test yet.

The Yeltz women are unbeaten after 18 games of their inaugural season.

They lie second in Birmingham County Division Two with games in hand on leaders Rushall United.

But they face a huge test on January 20 when they host West Bromwich Albion's women's side, Sporting Club Albion, in the quarter-final of the Birmingham County Cup at The Grove, Halesowen.

Albion play in the FA Women's Premier Northern Division and swept away Solihull Borough Ladies 12-0 in the third round.

But Yeltz manager Scott McKee is delighted with the progress of his charges.

The team have scored 114 goals, conceding just 18, and beat Wood Star 10-0 in their last league game.

"I'm very lucky with the signings we've had," said firefighter McKee - the team are in partnership with the fire service and carry the brigade logo on team jackets.

"All are class players with a very good history."

"I have two excellent captains in Dani Reade and Lyndsey Glover and a squad of enormous ability."

"In the county cup we have beaten teams 10 leagues above us. The West Brom game will be a great test for us."

Running in the family

THE Powell family were to the fore in West Bromwich Harriers' annual Boxing Day Handicap at Dartmouth Park.

Council alterations saw the course changed from 3.3 miles to a 3.66.

Winner on handicap was Archie Powell in 26min 54sec, with son Richard second in 25.24 and daughter Jenny clocking 31.45.

The fastest run came from Girmal Dehl in 22.41. Other finishers were Ruth Blackwood third, John Buckley fifth, Jim Greenwood sixth, Dominic Ashton eighth, Dave Jones ninth and Chris Thompson 10th.

Over Christmas, seven Harriers entered the Telford 10k-plus with James Jefferson and Steve Pitt in the elite group of runners. Olympian Andy Baddeley was the winner. Jefferson was 107th of more than 700 with Pitt 147th.



Scorer Ben Haseley is congratulated

Late equaliser pins back Halesowen

HONOURS were equal in a keenly-contested Evo-Stik Division One South encounter which saw seven yellow cards.

Tesfa Robinson struck a late equaliser for Chasetown after Ben Haseley's 24th goal of the season had handed Halesowen a first-half lead, **writes David Johnson.**

In a lively opening, Halesowen captain Brendan Kelly crashed a 30-yard free-kick against the Chasetown crossbar.

The Yeltz then grabbed a 25th-minute lead when goalkeeper Dean Coleman's long clearance turned defence into attack and found Haseley to squirt a low shot under goalkeeper Ryan Price, despite the attention of

Halesowen T 1 Chasetown 1

three defenders. Halesowen created further chances before the interval with Gavin Winsper's back-header from Tom Warner's free-kick falling just wide and a Jean-Michel Gueyes shot bringing a parried save by Price.

The goalkeeper then pushed Nathaniel Caines' free-kick onto the top of the net and, seconds before the interval, Caines squared for Haseley, who sliced his effort wide of the goal.

Chasetown introduced substitute Theo Robinson for the second half, but it was Haseley who almost doubled the home side's

lead after 52 minutes when his good individual effort forced Price into making a fine reflex save.

Simon Brown's loud appeal for a 63rd-minute Chasetown penalty was turned down and the Scholars improved further after Halesowen's Warner limped off injured.

Brown fired over the bar from just 12 yards in the 72nd minute and four minutes later Theo Robinson's cross bobbed off surprised striker Gary Hay.

Chasetown's late pressure finally forced an 87th-minute equaliser. A right-wing free-kick found its way through the home defence for Tesfa Robinson to sweep the ball home.

Danks goal ends hope for Yeltz

Sutton Coldfield 2 Halesowen 0

A TWO-GOAL deficit at half-time proved too much for Halesowen to come back from as their Boxing Day Northern Premier Division One South fixture ended in disappointment.

It was a slightly fortuitous goal that gave the home side the lead on the 37th minute through Lee Parsons.

He unleashed either a shot or long ball forward from 40 yards that flew over Halesowen goalkeeper Dean Coleman and into the net.

Parsons turned provider on half-time when he passed for former Halesowen striker Mark Danks to apply the finishing touch.

Halesowen fought back in the second half, Jean Michel-Gueyes shooting wide and Brendan Kelly seeing his free-kick deflected past the post before Luke Corbett produced a good save from the home keeper.

Yeltz's top scorer Ben Haseley failed to get on the score sheet but did produce a shot on 80 minutes that hit the bar.

Drivers rev up for award night

RALLY drivers are preparing for their big awards night - and looking forward to this year's events.

The Heart of England rally championships awards night takes place at Hagley Golf Club, Stourbridge tomorrow. The press launch of the 2013 championship will take place on January 26 at Curborough, Lichfield.

Schedule: March 17, AGBO Stages, Weston Park; April 13, Horba D'Isis Stages, MIRA Nuneaton; May 25, Red Dragon IT Stages, Down Ampney; June 21-22, Lovell Rally of the Midlands, Hinckley; August 17, Centenary Stages, Barkston Heath; September 29, Patriot Stages, Caerwent; October 26, Fat Albert Stages, Keen; November 24, Carfax Stages, RAF Benson.

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CLARKE SETS SIGHTS ON CUP ADVENTURE

ALBION boss Steve Clarke has declared an FA Cup adventure as a major new year target after his side began 2013 with Premier League defeat to Fulham.

The Scot set his sights on an extended FA Cup run as he urged his players to repay their fans for Tuesday's giveaway against the Cottagers.

Clarke pledged to field a strong side in Saturday's third-round Cup tie at QPR - and called on Albion to make up for the defeat by claiming a shock win later in the campaign.

"I said when I came here I would try to do well in the cup competitions and I see no reason to change that," said Clarke.

"I might have to rest one or two players just because that's the stage of the season we're at but, fingers crossed, we'll get one or two of the injured players back."

"I'm not 100 per cent sure that will happen but it would be good if they did just to lessen the workload on some of the boys who are playing all the time."

Consolidate

The Baggies remain seventh in the Premier League despite beginning the new year with that 2-1 home defeat to Fulham.

And Clarke is setting his sights high for 2013.

"To try and have a good cup run and consolidate and build on the first half of the season," he said. "We've put ourselves in a good position."

Clarke confirmed Yousouf Mulumbu will be available at Loftus Road before flying to South Africa to link up with DR Congo for the Africa Cup of Nations.

That could keep him out of Albion's side for up to a month. Meanwhile, the Hawthorns head coach revealed that Scotland international Graham Dorrans

by Steve Madeley

was fit for Tuesday's game. Dorrans failed even to make the bench against the Cottagers despite starting the 2-0 defeat at Manchester United on Saturday.

Meanwhile, defender Billy Jones urged Albion to stay positive as he admitted his error helped Fulham snatch victory at The Hawthorns.

The Baggies full-back took responsibility for Alexander Kacaniklic's winning strike in the 2-1 defeat, but insisted the Baggies should still be optimistic about their new year prospects.

"We have to remain positive because the position we're in is a good one," said Jones. "We just want to kick on from where we are."

"We want to get to 40 points and then see how far we can go."

The Baggies fought back from a poor first-half display and a 1-0 half-time deficit to equalise against Fulham and looked favourites for a winner when Kacaniklic struck, Jones said. "We had them by the throat and I thought we were going to go ahead."

"But I've made a mistake. I presumed he (Kacaniklic) would mis-time his run and be offside, and he wasn't."

Poor start to new year as Cottagers take points

Albion 1 Fulham 2

ALBION made a surprisingly poor start to 2013 with this home defeat to struggling Fulham.

The Baggies were everything they had not been during the previous calendar year which saw this team assemble 58 points from 40 Premier League games, **writes Martin Swain.**

Lethargic, riddled with error and undermined by self-doubt, they allowed a Fulham team with one win in 12 games to dominate them far too easily in the opening half. Briefly, they roused themselves to rattle Fulham after the break. But they were always running uphill.

Fulham, pushing and prodding the ball around Dimitar Berbatov's mesmeric touch, eased their way into the game.

For more than half an hour, they failed to produce a telling finish but in the 40th minute, they swept out of defence to release Ashkan Dejagah, who stepped inside Liam Ridgwell and set up Berbatov to finish past Ben Foster.

In the second half Albion struck an immediate equaliser through Romelu Lukaku after some splendid work by Billy Jones.

Lukaku might have done better than strike the outside of a post before Fulham survived a remarkable triple-decker.

Keeper David Stockdale blocked Lukaku's shot; the rebound flew to Zoltan Gera who hit the post and Chris Brunt's rising drive was headed away at full stretch by Aaron Hughes.

Fulham were then rewarded for their stubborn resistance when Jones and Gareth McAuley were caught by Alexander Kacaniklic arriving between them before he spun away to beat Foster.



Romelu Lukaku, right, celebrates his goal against Fulham with Gabriel Tamas

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